

# Section 7 The expressive figure

## **Guiding Faculty**

Albert Dorne, Founder  
[1904-1965]

Norman Rockwell  
Al Parker  
Ben Stahl  
Stevan Dohanos  
Jon Whitcomb  
Robert Fawcett  
Peter Helck  
Austin Briggs  
Harold Von Schmidt  
George Giusti  
Fred Ludekens  
Bernard Fuchs  
Bob Peak  
Tom Allen  
Lorraine Fox  
Franklin McMahon

Ben Shahn  
Doris Lee  
Dong Kingman  
Arnold Blanch  
Adolf Dehn  
Fletcher Martin  
Will Barnet  
Syd Solomon  
Julian Levi  
Joseph Hirsch

Milton Caniff  
Al Capp  
Dick Cavalli  
Whitney Darrow, Jr.  
Rube Goldberg  
Harry Haenigsen  
Willard Mullin  
Virgil Partch  
Barney Tobey





*Creation of Man*, Michelangelo  
Sistine Chapel, Rome

## The human form

"The highest object for art is man." Michelangelo made this comment over four hundred years ago. The human figure is still the most expressive of all subjects. Any emotion, any idea, can be conveyed through the human form. Look at the heroic figures in the painting above — the beauty, balance and simplicity of the majestic forms tells us that the Renaissance period, when this was painted, was a magic moment in history. Man was confident, the center of the universe. Now look at the withdrawn, gaunt figure across the page. Giacometti, a contemporary artist, put all his creative power here into depicting a human being as he saw him in our complex century — a skeletal stranger, alone. An interplanetary visitor would find it difficult to believe that Michelangelo and Giacometti were portraying the same creature — man!

The human figure, we know, has changed little in tens of thousands of years, but the artist conveying his own point of view and reflecting his times has seen man in a wide, sometimes wild range! Greek and Roman artists ennobled the

human form, making it almost godlike, whereas in the Far East the human figure was mainly used as a decorative element. Some artists have worked to portray man as exactly as possible, catching every detail in his outward appearance; others have sought to emphasize man's inner being — often distorting the realistic form. The artist draws not only what he sees, but what he feels — and you will, too.

Keen observation is the first step. Watch people more carefully than ever. Take special note of their actions and attitudes; look for emotional gestures and expressions. You'll learn that people can and do communicate without saying a word. You'll notice characteristics and qualities in people that you've overlooked before.

Did you realize that to catch what you see on paper — even before your hand guides your pencil — your own emotions and intellect are called into play? This is why drawing well sometimes seems so difficult. You see what you want to draw, you think you have your subject clearly in mind, but it

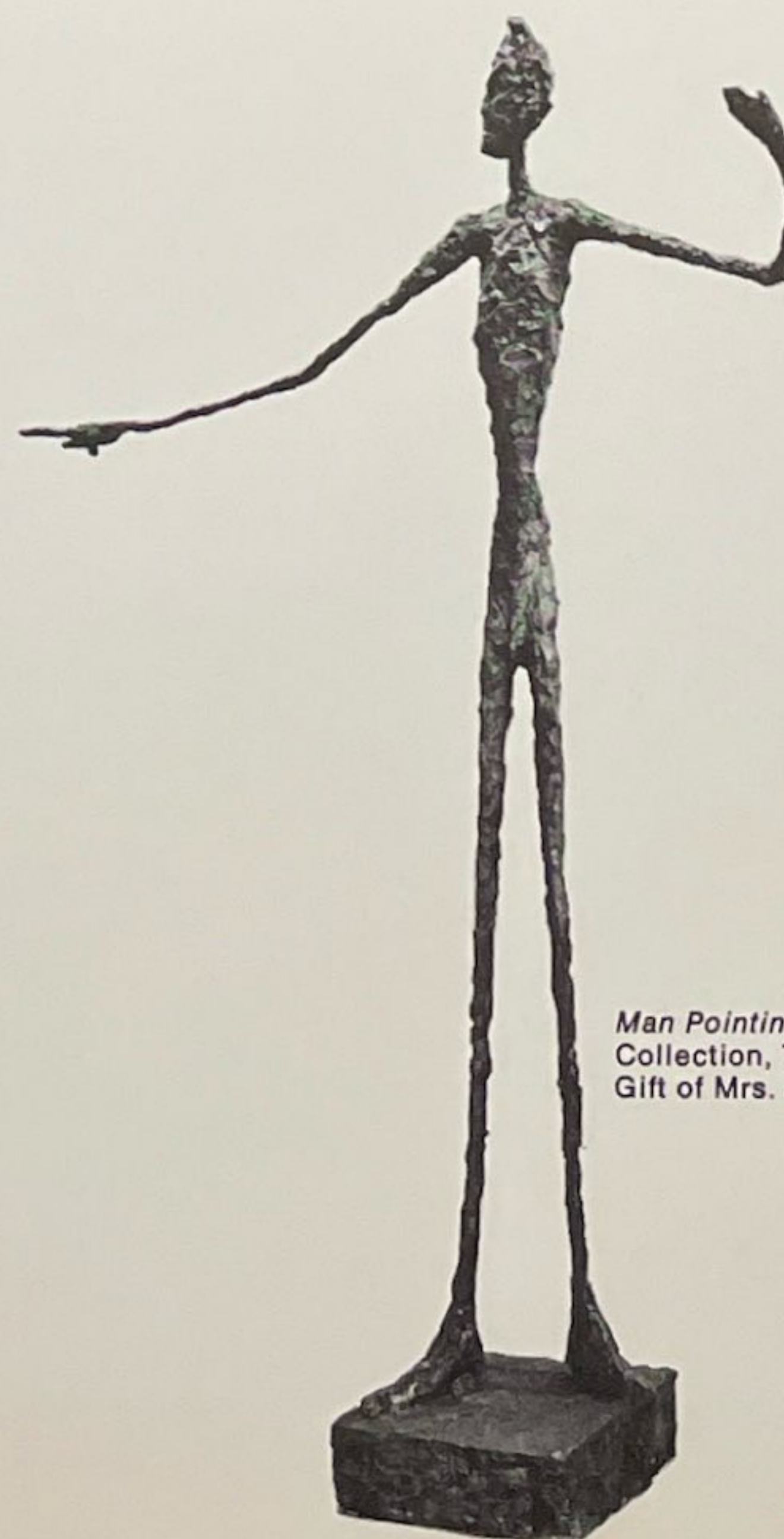




seems impossible to transmit to paper. We're going to help you coordinate this special combination of eye-mind-and-hand so you can draw the human figure in your own way, so it will look "right" to you — that is, the way you want it to be.

Artists have often concentrated on anatomy — on muscles and on bone structure — but much more important to you now is a fresh understanding of the human figure. In learning to draw the human figure well it's imperative, of course, to draw — and draw again — until your pen or pencil can more closely put on paper what you see and feel. You'll find the gesture drawings you're going to do stimulating and of immeasurable help in drawing the figure in an incisive, vital way. As you learn to see your friends, family and even strangers as unique individuals, and your drawings begin to reflect their uniqueness, life will have another new dimension for you. People are the most interesting of subjects!

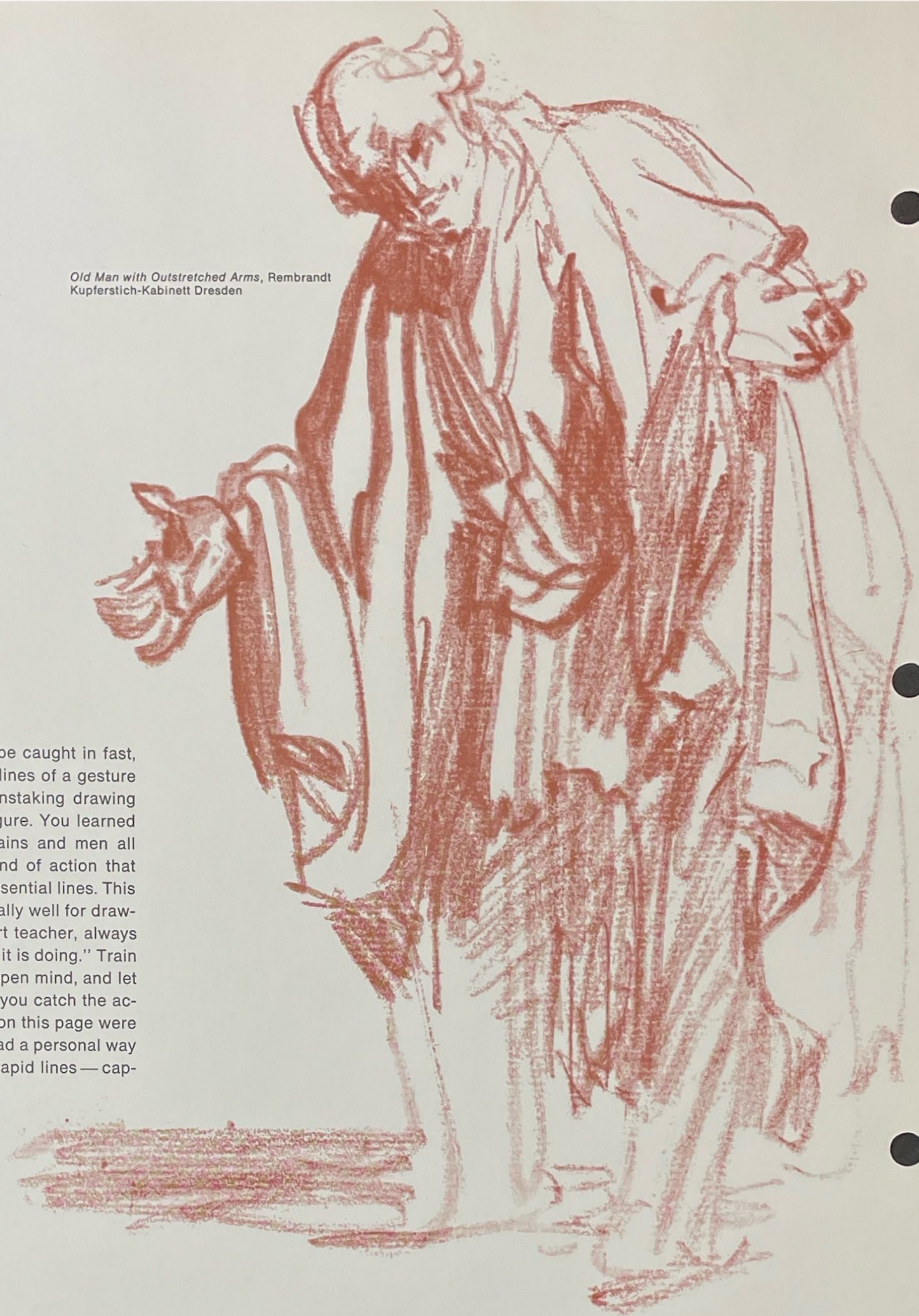
Now, with plenty of paper at hand, let's see how you can make your figure drawings come alive.



*Man Pointing*, Alberto Giacometti  
Collection, The Museum of Modern Art, New York  
Gift of Mrs. John D. Rockefeller, III



*Old Man with Outstretched Arms*, Rembrandt  
Kupferstich-Kabinett Dresden



## The gesture— a natural way to draw

The human form — its very essence — can be caught in fast, immediate impressions. The quickly drawn lines of a gesture sketch often show more clearly than a painstaking drawing the vitality and spontaneity of the human figure. You learned in Section 6 that weeds, windmills, mountains and men all have an underlying spirit, a gesture—a kind of action that can be conveyed by drawing just the most essential lines. This is a natural way to draw which works especially well for drawing the figure. Kimon Nicolaides, a noted art teacher, always said, “Don’t draw what a thing is, draw what it is doing.” Train yourself to see with a sensitive eye and an open mind, and let your hand respond almost automatically as you catch the action in your subjects. The gesture drawings on this page were done by great artists; notice that each one had a personal way of combining what he saw and felt in a few rapid lines — capturing the spirit of *his* subject.

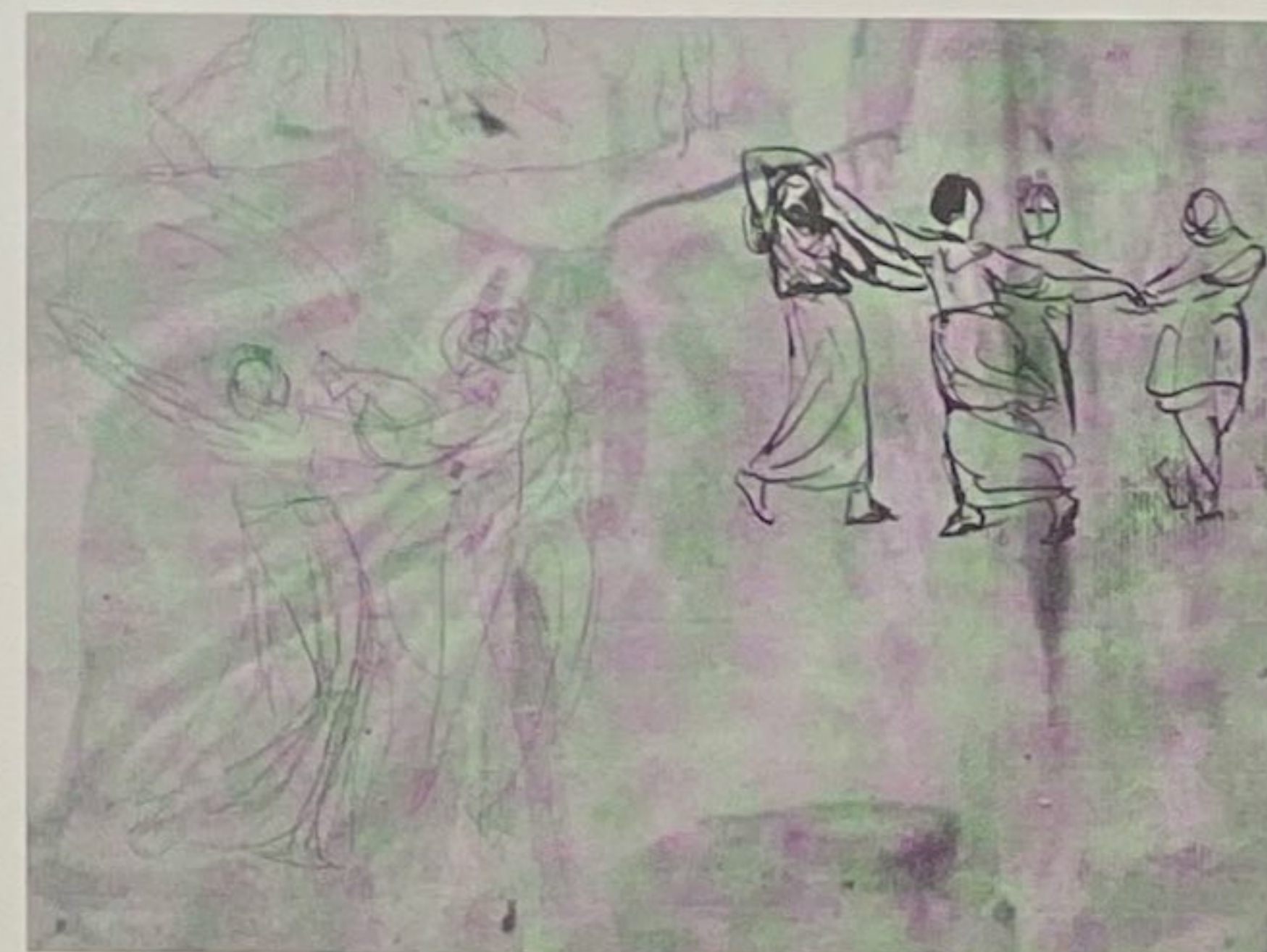
*A Clown*, Honoré Daumier  
The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York  
Rogers Fund, 1927



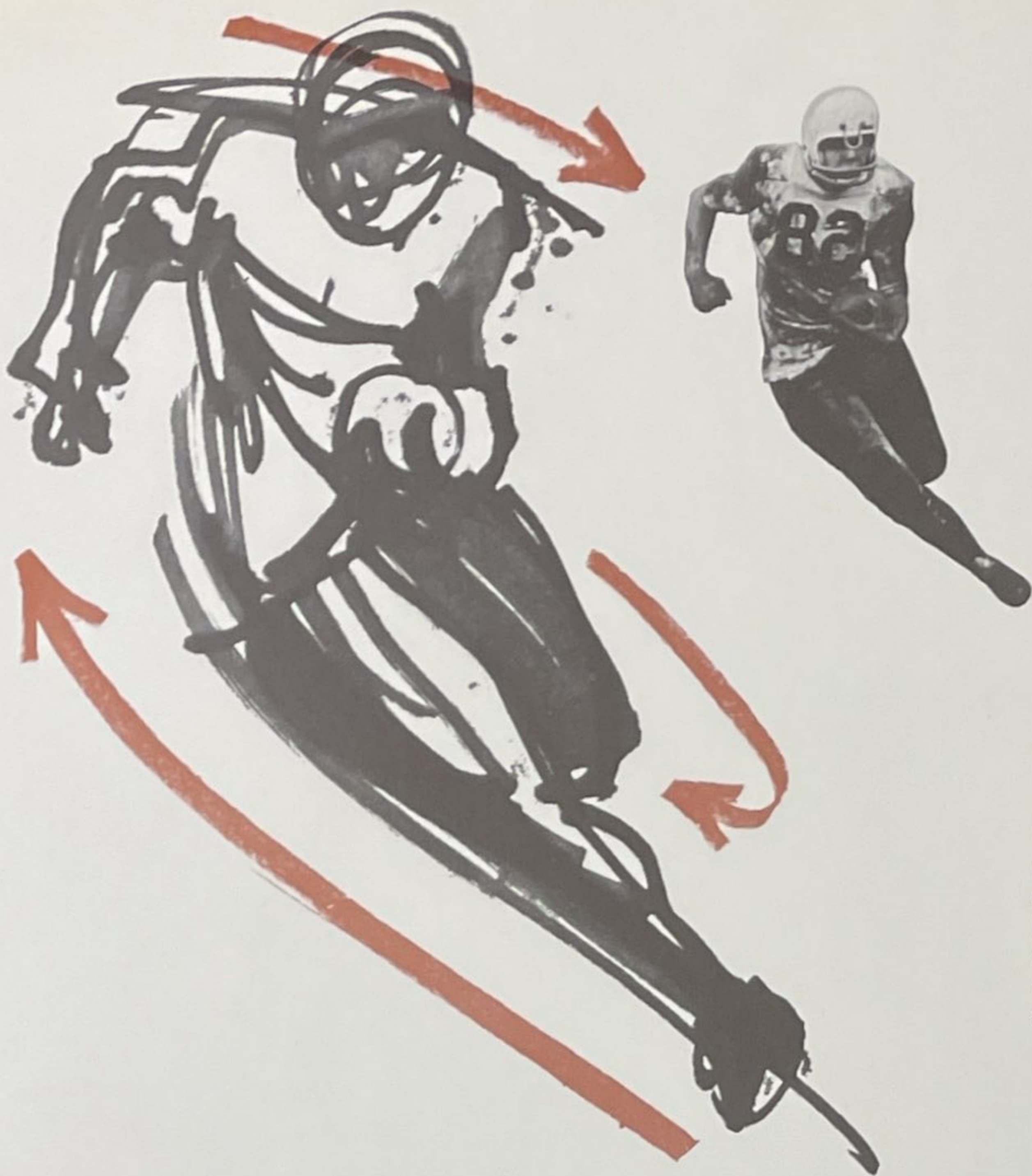
*Sheet of Sketches*, Théodore Géricault  
The Cleveland Museum of Art  
Dudley P. Allen Fund



*Dancing Figures*, George Romney  
The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York  
Rogers Fund, 1911

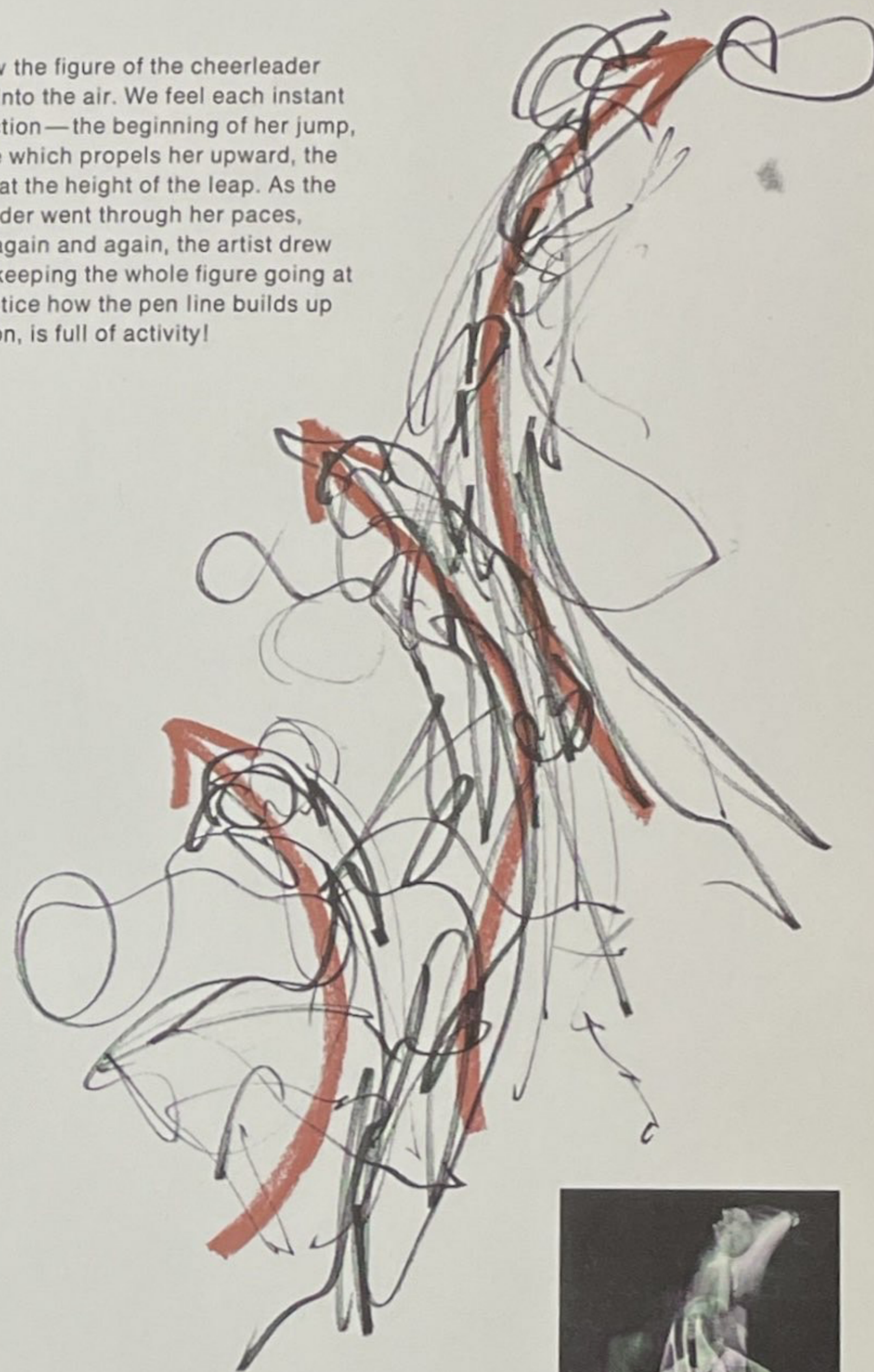




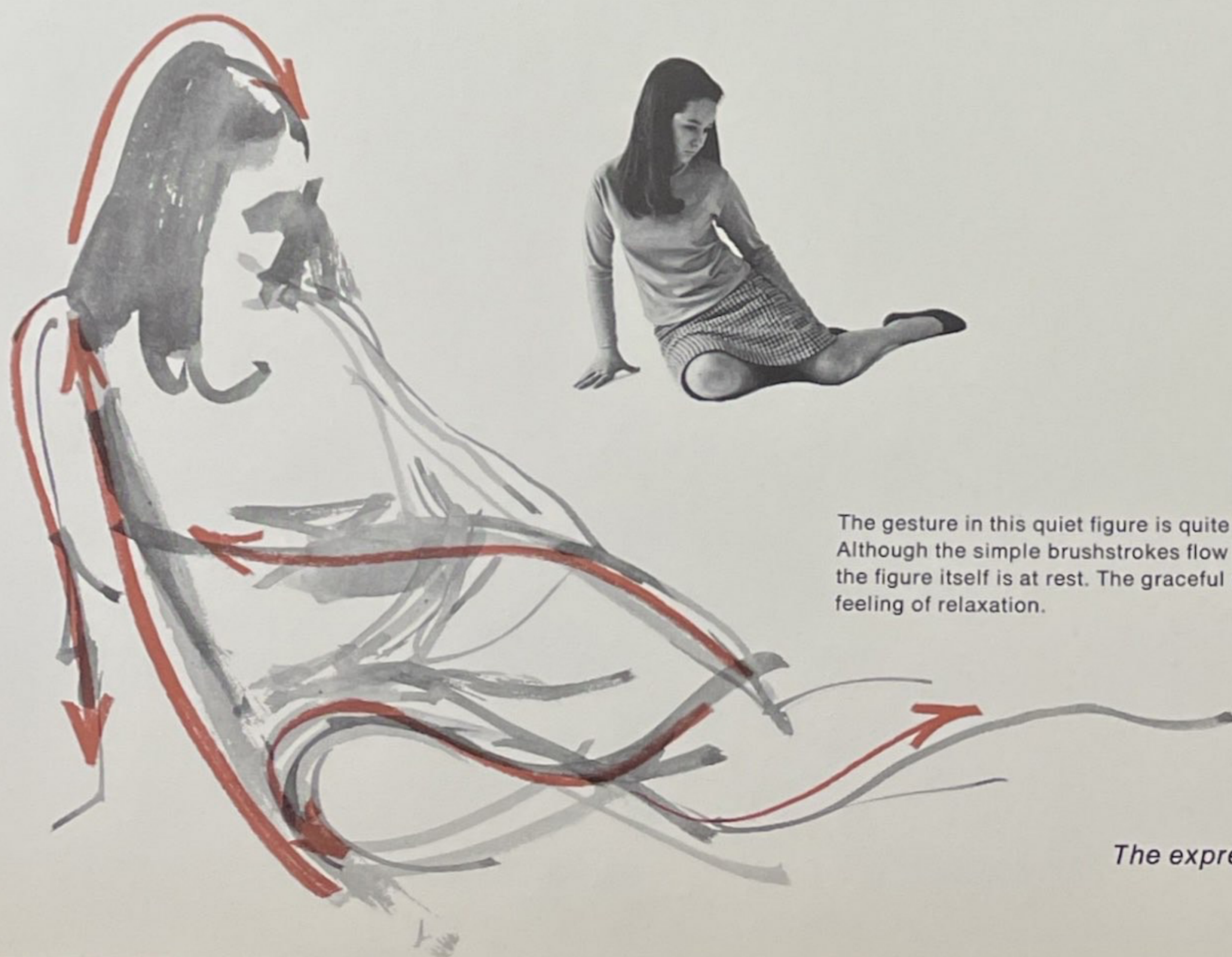


The tension in this football player—his body tilted as he eludes an unseen tackle—can be caught with just a few strokes. Even without details, the thrust of the essential lines, the curving sweep to the left, convey the tautness, the drive of this exciting moment.

Feel how the figure of the cheerleader springs into the air. We feel each instant of the action—the beginning of her jump, the force which propels her upward, the moment at the height of the leap. As the cheerleader went through her paces, leaping again and again, the artist drew rapidly, keeping the whole figure going at once. Notice how the pen line builds up the motion, is full of activity!



Learning to draw the figure begins with letting yourself go — by seeing with all your senses, by *feeling* the action, the gesture, yourself! This is not only the most natural way to begin to draw but is the most stimulating. Look at your subject — what is it you see first? Feel what he is doing, get involved in the action. What are the most important lines of direction? When you draw, don't use just your fingers and wrist, but let your arm swing and guide your hand as you freely move through the whole figure. Go from one end of the body to the other, constantly letting your lines cross and cover each other, almost without taking your pencil or pen from the paper. You'll find that even a scribbled beginning sketch will have a certain aliveness and can show the energy and "feeling" in the person you're drawing — a spirit which will be retained in your finished work.



The gesture in this quiet figure is quite different—it is within the pose. Although the simple brushstrokes flow in one direction, then another, the figure itself is at rest. The graceful curve of the lines conveys a feeling of relaxation.





The secret to skillful drawing is simple: Practice. And more practice! You'll be drawing hundreds of quick studies and we hope you'll work on gesture throughout your Course. Wherever and whenever you can, sketch people as quickly as you can, both in motion and at rest. Capture the spirit of the whole figure. At school, in a bus, on the street, at home — there are opportunities everywhere.

On the next page we've outlined some special exercises for you to try. Get a friend or someone in your family to model for you — bending over, twisting, reaching, making free rhythmic movements that you can catch. (When a live model isn't available, you can always get plenty of practice by catching some of the action on your television screen!) Make dozens and dozens of gesture drawings, see how clearly you can tell what is happening in a quickly sketched figure. Even when you're able to see and draw the basic gesture with greater ease — and in any pose — keep right on drawing this way. Your ability will grow also in catching life, action and spirit in all your work.





## Try these gesture exercises!

### 1 Limit your time

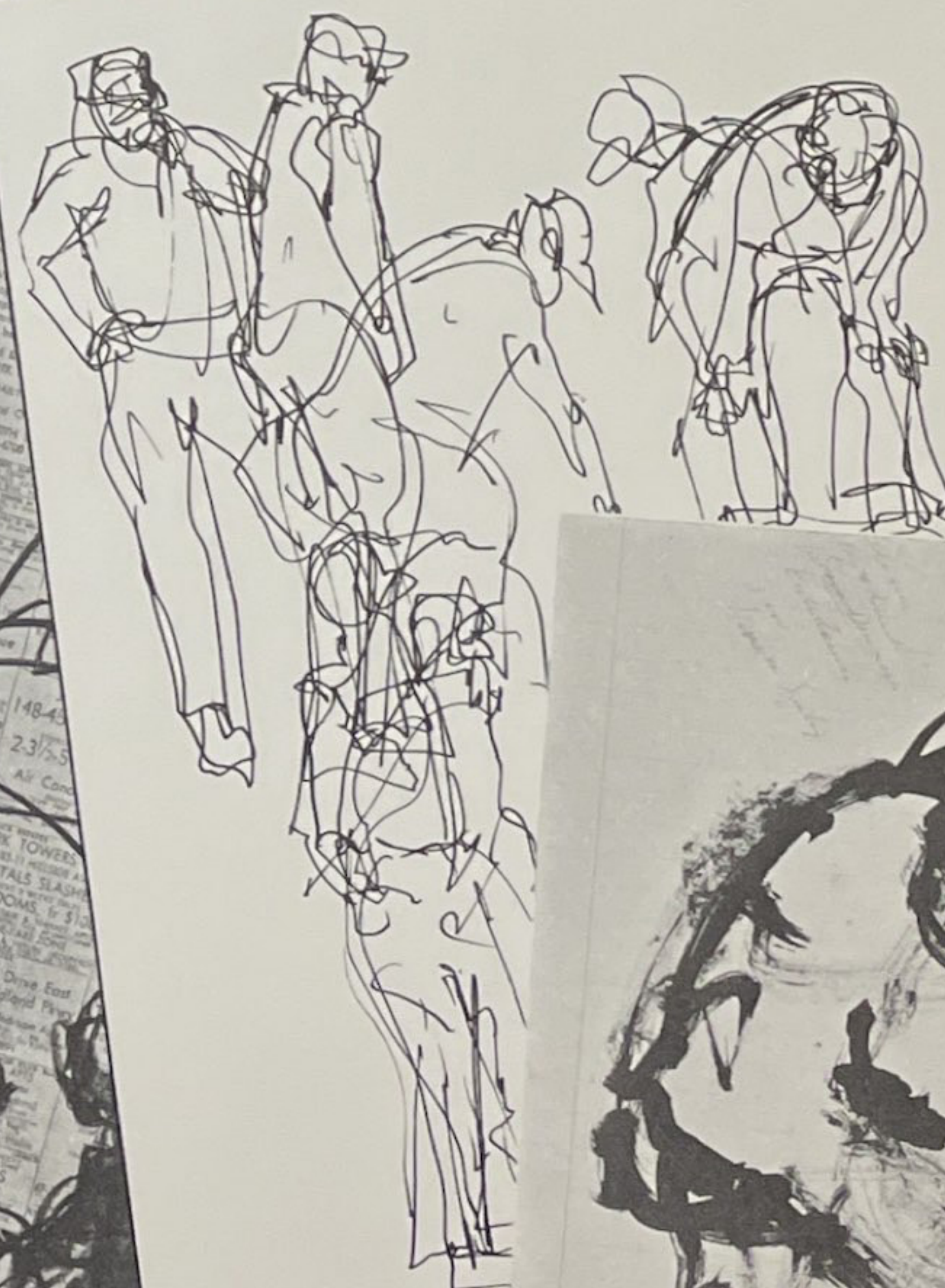
First, let's start off doing gesture sketches with a time limit. Speed is the key here! Allow five seconds to catch a fleeting impression of each pose your model takes. You'll barely have time to indicate every part of the body. After you've made many of these very brief sketches, give yourself a little more time — about ten to fifteen seconds. Have your model take the same poses. Notice now that although the figure begins to emerge more clearly, the essential gesture is the same as suggested in the five-second sketches.

### 2 Limit your materials

This exercise is also to be done speedily, but you'll be limited by the materials you use rather than by a clock. Load your largest watercolor brush with ink or black watercolor, then try to say everything important about the figure before the ink runs out. Try many sketches this way — see how much gesture you can catch before the ink is gone. Here's another challenge: Light a wooden kitchen match, blow it out, then see how much gesture you can get on a paper with the charred end. Even when limiting yourself to only a few strokes you can catch the essence.

### 3 Draw repeated movement

A repeated set of movements is called for in this exercise. Have your model perform some simple action — even just bending over, then standing up straight, again and again. Or look for repeated action that happens naturally — a man shoveling, someone hammering, a dancer practicing. Keep drawing the repeated action over and over. Your lines will build up and your drawn figures will have real movement. Capture the feeling of the entire action as we have done in the drawing of the lively cheerleader on page 5.







Can't you almost feel the solidity, heaviness and roundness of the chemist's weight in the photograph? Now look at the illustration alongside; to create the same feeling of weight, the artist has used lines which seem to go right around the figure. They help us feel the thickness of the chest, the roundness of the head, arms and waistline — we can sense the overall solidity of this man!

### Developing weight and solidity

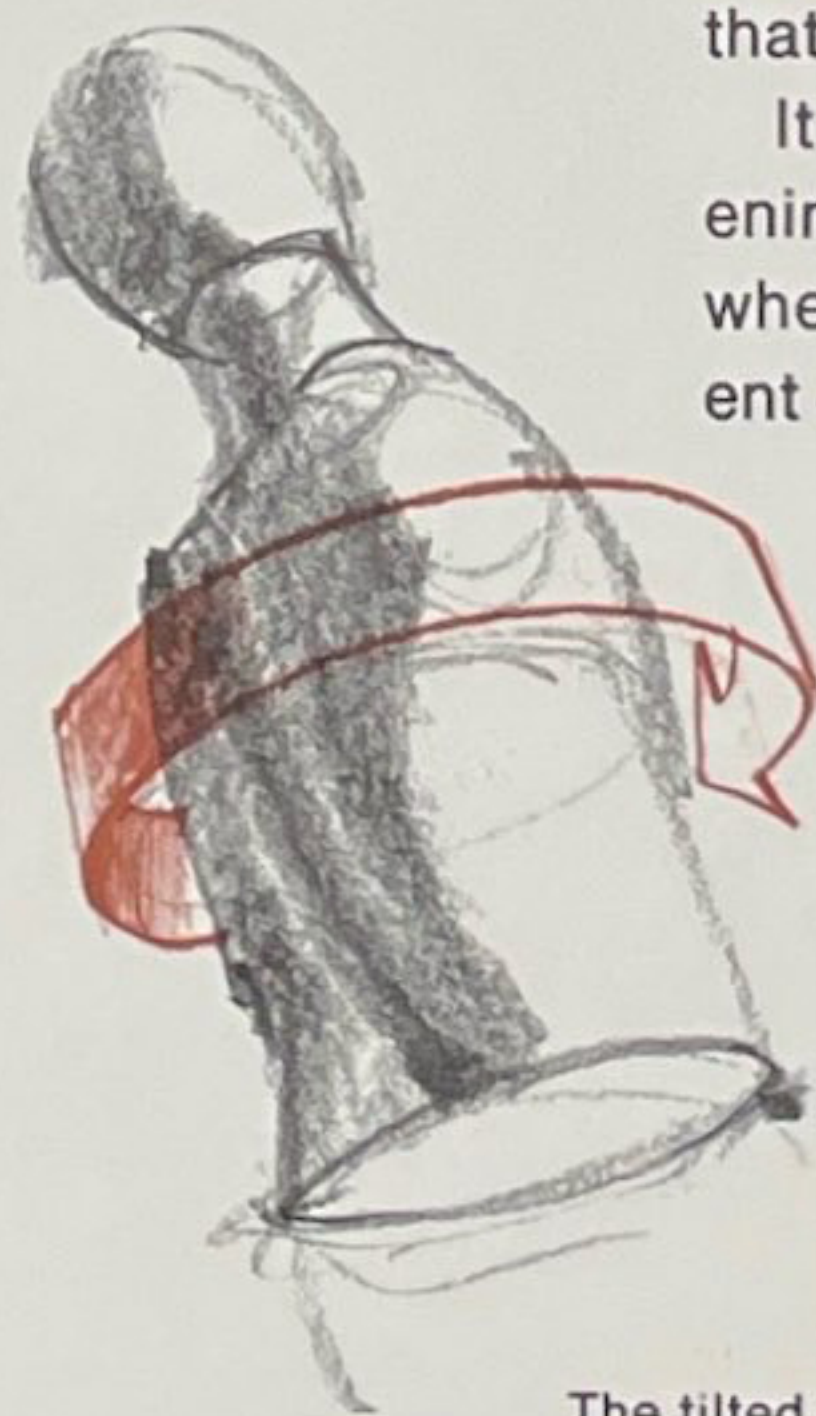
That special sensitivity which allows you to understand and feel gesture is something you need for all your work. When you want to draw a lifelike human figure, take time to imagine, to really feel with all your senses, the solidity, the weight, the volume of the form. Concentrate on drawing as if your pencil were actually touching the figure, drawing right on around the curves so you can catch the feeling of depth — the third dimension. (See how the lines seem to go completely around the torso, the waist, the arms and head of the man above.) The illusion of depth, volume and weight is what makes a solid object seem real, makes a figure drawn on a flat piece of paper become an almost tangible human form. These effects are helped by the feeling that the artist has drawn right on around to the side of his subject that we can't see — and by his use of light and shadow and by foreshortening.

The masterful handling of these techniques by Robert Fawcett, of your Guiding Faculty, has produced the large, wonderfully alive figures on these pages. You saw in Section 6 (turn to page 9!) how light and shadow can give a third dimension to a simply drawn cat; notice how Fawcett's more subtle use of light and shadow has captured the roundness, the many contours of the human figure.

### Draw what you see

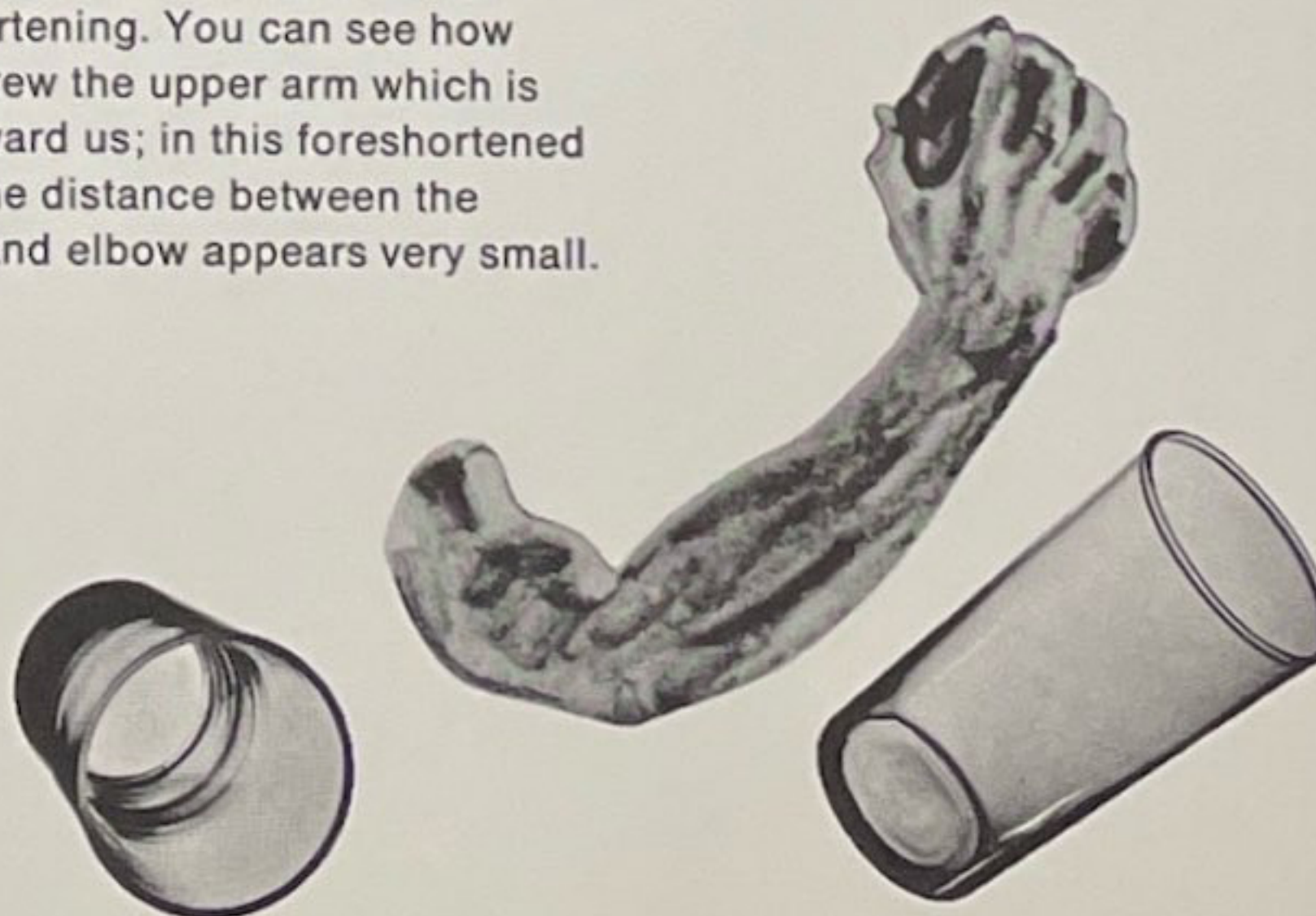
Foreshortening, which is a kind of perspective, can be easily understood if you study an ordinary drinking glass. Hold it upright at eye level and note its full length — its height from base to top. Tilt the glass toward you — or away from you — and notice how its length seems to become much shorter. Foreshortening helps give figure drawings depth and reality. Look at the foreshortened upper arm of Fawcett's stone thrower. We know that the arm is not unnaturally short, but when it is drawn exactly as it looks, it creates the illusion that it is coming toward us in space.

It takes a certain amount of discipline to handle foreshortening, to draw a form's width and length as you see it, even when you know, in fact, that the dimensions are very different — but with practice you can do it!



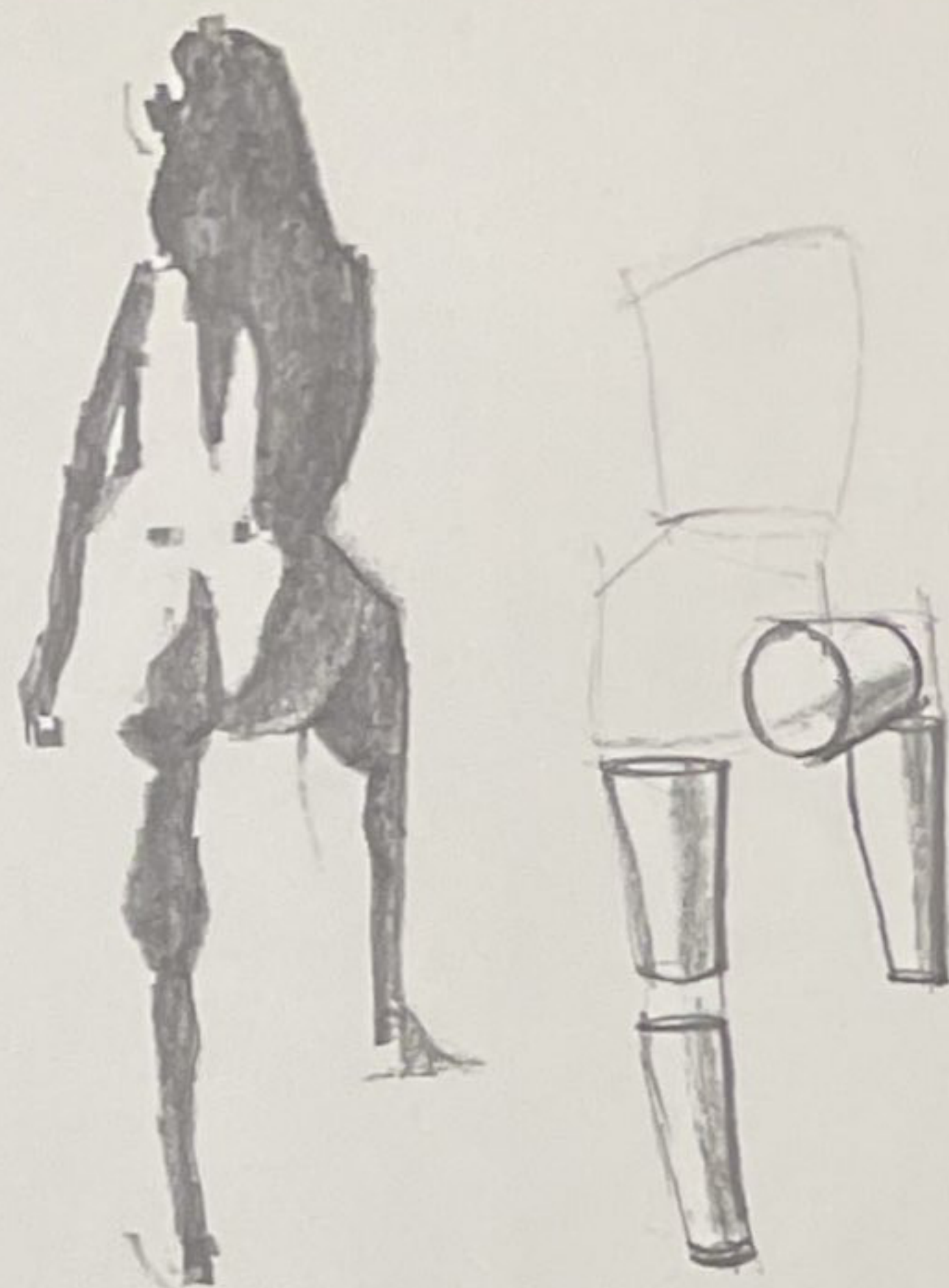
This diagram shows in simplest terms the basic pattern of light and shadow areas that Fawcett used to convey the feeling of weight and solidity in his finished drawing. Even without anatomical details we're aware of the underlying structure of the torso, neck and head and of the other side of the man — the side we can't see.

The tilted drinking glasses below demonstrate dramatically the artist's use of foreshortening. You can see how Fawcett drew the upper arm which is turned toward us; in this foreshortened position the distance between the shoulder and elbow appears very small.





Here are some exercises for you to try — to be drawn from a model. Each one will help you develop a feeling for drawing weight and solidity. Ask a friend or a parent to pose for you; although artists many times work from a nude, the principles they follow apply to your model, too, no matter how he or she is dressed.



The diagrams here are to show you the preliminary thinking of an artist when he tackles the problems of light and shadow and foreshortening. The diagram on the left analyzes the light areas and shadow areas. Notice how they fall into a pattern that creates a feeling of dimension. The diagram at the right is another example of the tilted-glass principle to demonstrate foreshortening. In Fawcett's drawing the upper part of the girl's raised right leg is so extremely foreshortened that we see little of its length; this is an excellent example of how foreshortening vividly gives an impression that the figure occupies space!



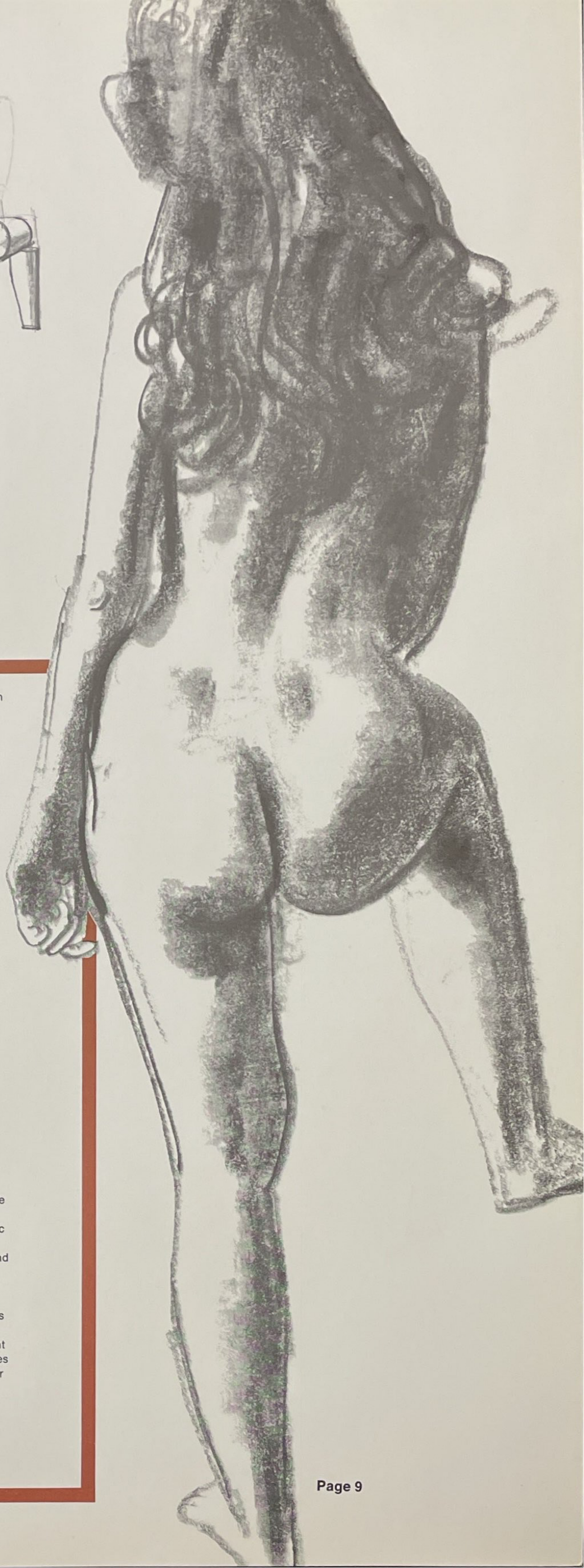
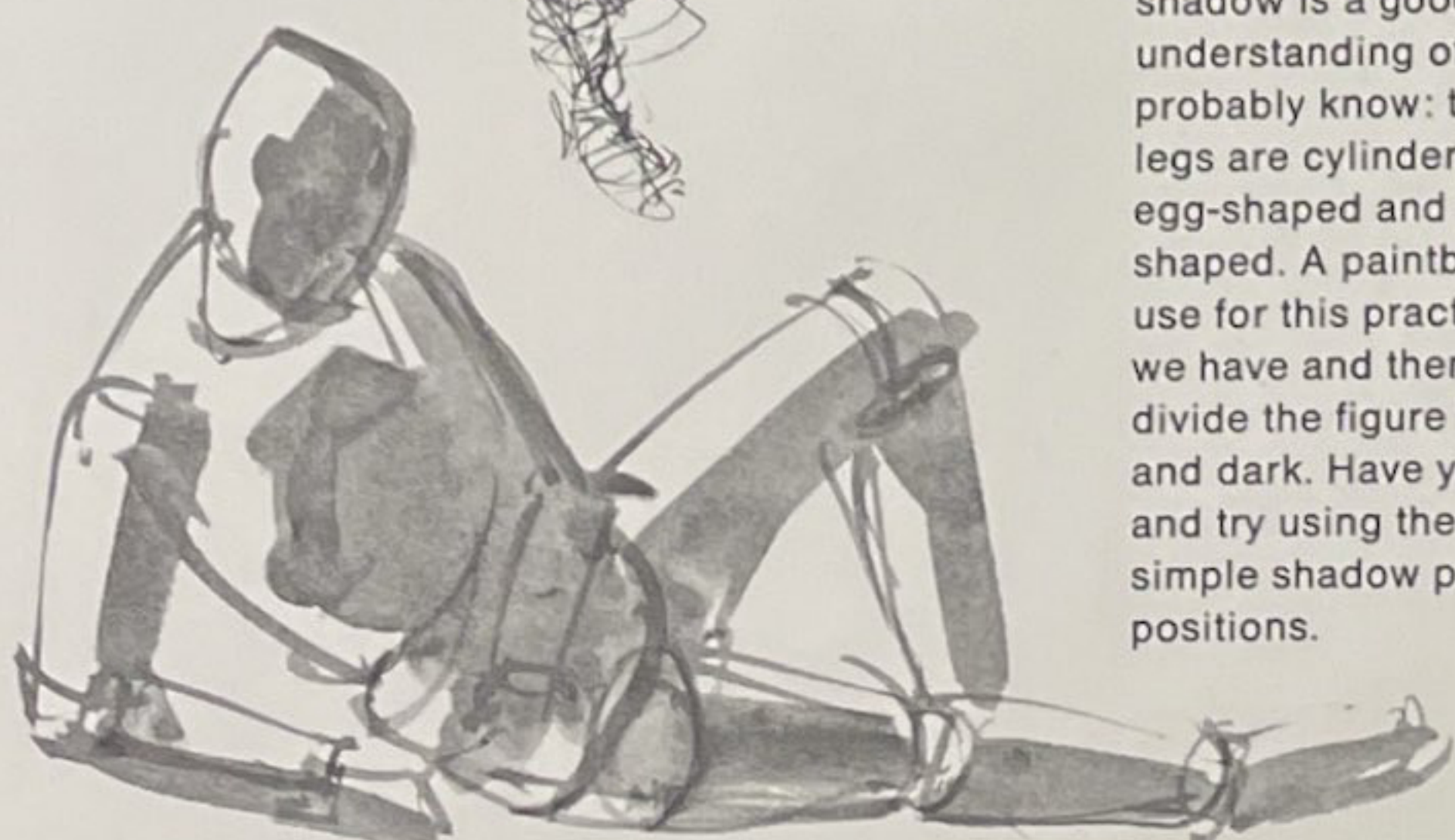
**Drawing from the core** Take the side of your charcoal, crayon or chalk this time and begin by building up a dark center — this is the core of your figure. (The core is something we can only sense, but we know without seeing that every form — a tree, an apple, a person — has a core.) Continue to work outward from this dark center, moving your charcoal in a continuous motion toward the edges of the figure. Soften and lighten as you radiate from the core. As you work from the inside out, see how the head, torso, arms and legs take on a dark mass in the center, which gives the figure a definite sense of weight.



**The modeled figure** There is a definite method in producing even a scribbled drawing such as the one to the left. Use a pencil or pen and rotate your lines in a continuous movement, somewhat as you did in the core drawing. But this time, think only of the surfaces of the model. Press your pencil down harder where contours recede. You'll find that you almost automatically draw more lightly where the form comes toward you.



**Simplify the figure** Developing a figure composed of simple basic forms and the simplest possible pattern of light and shadow is a good way to acquire a basic understanding of the human form. You probably know: the neck, torso, arms and legs are cylinder-shaped; the head is egg-shaped and the feet are wedge-shaped. A paintbrush is a good tool to use for this practice. Draw the shapes as we have and then — using a wash — divide the figure into broad areas of light and dark. Have your model change poses and try using the same shapes and other simple shadow patterns for different positions.







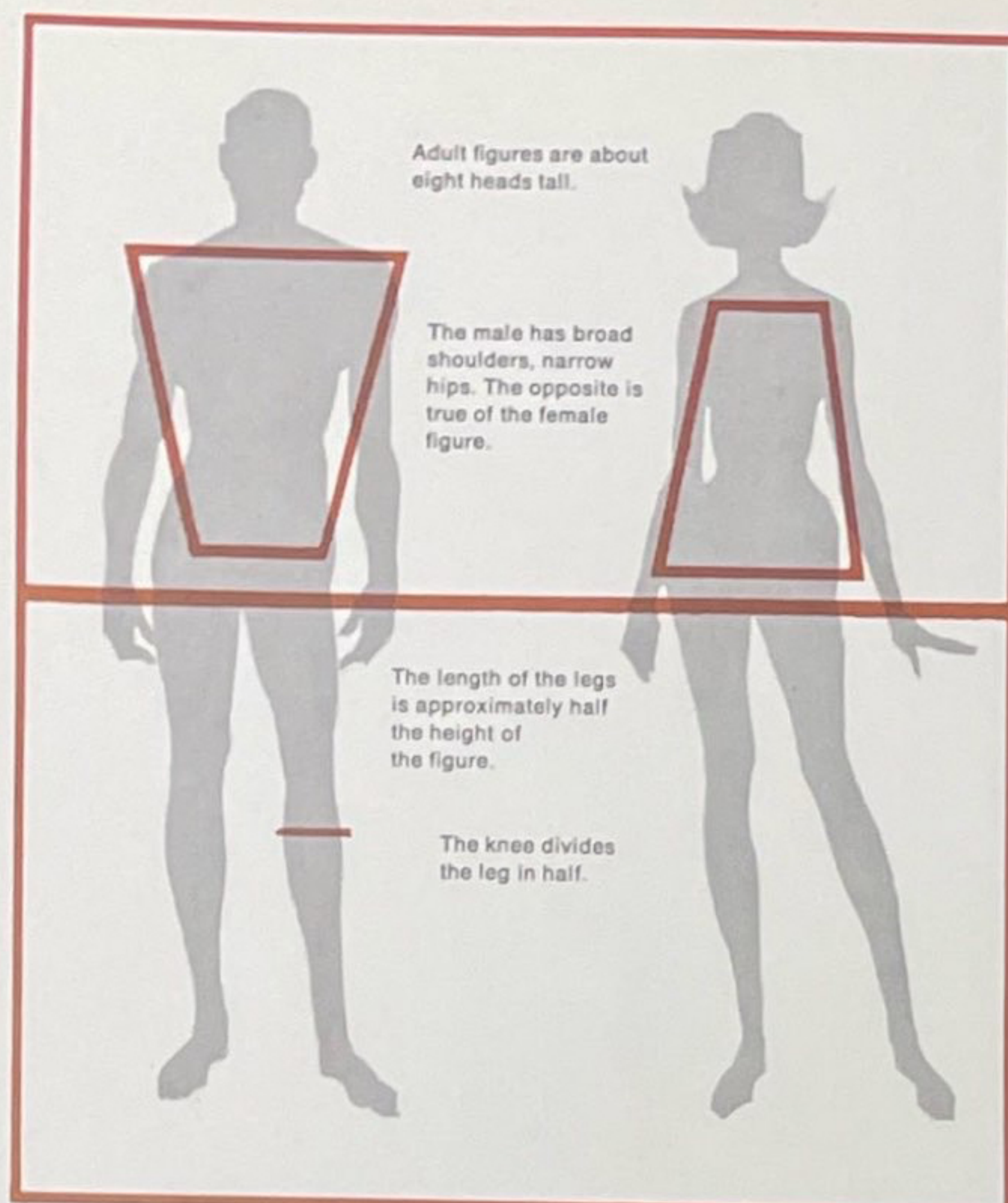
## Proportions

Nature has passed out sizes and shapes at random, so that a perfectly proportioned figure is hard to find — in fact one wonders if there is such a thing! Look at your classmates, at your parents and their friends — not critically, just carefully. Study how people are proportioned, how their parts are “assembled” into a whole person. No matter how regular physical characteristics may seem at first, as you study them (planning to later draw what you’ve seen) you’ll discover certain irregularities — differences which make each one of us unique. Comparing people reveals the unexpected in proportion.

Glance at the next person you see — what is your overall impression? What adjective would generally describe him — angular, short, round, thin? Now look closely. Are his arms longer than they “should be”? Do his legs seem right for the rest of his body — or are they short in proportion to his overall height? Or exceedingly long? Really watch people, try to catch their differences on paper in sketches like those on this page. You may at times want to exaggerate an irregular feature — not to the point of caricature, but enough to show clearly your subject’s individuality.







### Ideal proportions — to use as a yardstick

Because of the many variations in the human shape, artists frequently refer to an "ideal" figure as a general guideline for proportions which are pleasing to the eye. This imaginary perfect figure has a direct relation, of course, to man's true anatomy and so it is a handy yardstick for you to use in checking proportions when you're drawing any human form. The standard for measuring the ideal figure is the human head. In the diagram at the left you can see that the adult measures about eight heads high. Notice, too, that the length of the legs divides the figure approximately in half. The male figure characteristically has broad shoulders and narrow hips, the female is slightly smaller, narrow shouldered and broader hiped.

The figure of the eight- or nine-year-old child at the right gives you a clue that these average adult proportions do not hold true when you draw children, for their heads are quite large when compared with the rest of them! A year-old baby measured by his own head size is but four heads high; a child of eight is a little over six heads high. A twelve-year-old is about seven heads high — from this age on all body parts develop at the same rate, so in drawing figures of your own age group you can use the ideal adult proportions as your take-off point.



The younger the child, the larger is the head in relation to his body. This boy is eight to nine years old and measures about six heads tall.

### Actual proportions — draw what you see

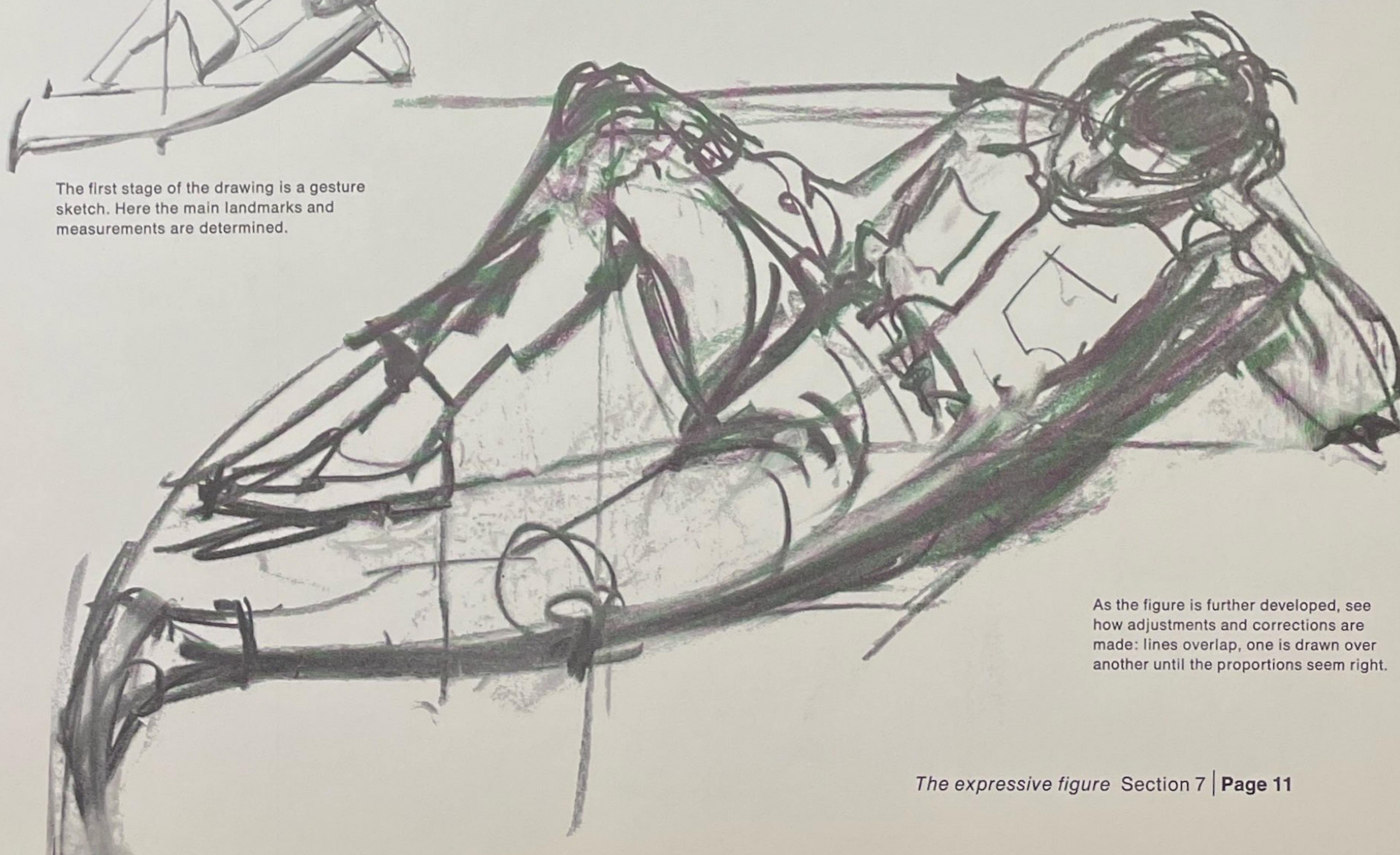
The key to understanding proportions is observation — really seeing the relation between the parts of the human figure. And the best way to draw a properly proportioned figure is to practice. Ask a friend to pose and, using a soft pencil or charcoal, try drawing him. He need not take the leaning position shown here — any pose will do that he can hold comfortably for fifteen or twenty minutes. Before you start to draw, though, take a few minutes to study your subject carefully. Visually locate three or four important landmarks; for instance, the line of the shoulders, the stretch of the leg, the bend of the knee are important points of the figure we've drawn here. Find similar landmarks in your subject, then make a quick gesture sketch,

establishing these points on paper.

Before you begin to develop your figure, lightly sketch in horizontal and vertical lines connecting the landmark points. These will be a great help in measuring lengths and getting angles in the right places. (Note, for example, how the boy's shoulder lines up with his knee.) Draw freely now, developing the whole figure. Don't work in detail on any specific areas and don't erase. Draw right over your errors, making continual corrections and adjustments. By relying on your eye you'll find that you can record quite accurately, catching the size and shape of your subject so your drawing will convey the uniqueness of a particular human being.



The first stage of the drawing is a gesture sketch. Here the main landmarks and measurements are determined.



As the figure is further developed, see how adjustments and corrections are made: lines overlap, one is drawn over another until the proportions seem right.





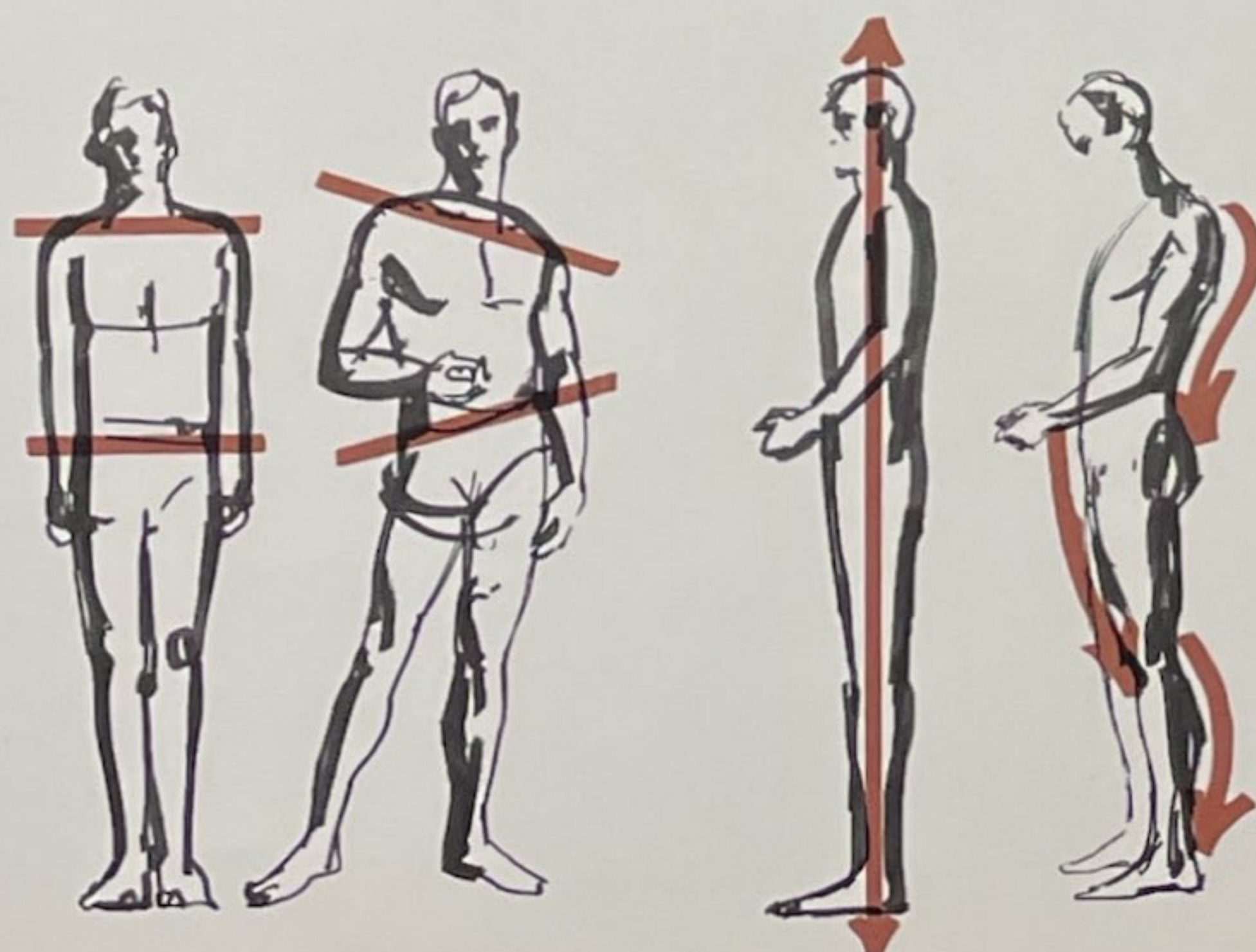
### Rhythm, balance and movement

"Why are we not always pleased with the most absolute possible resemblance of an imitation to its original object?" asked Sir Joshua Reynolds back in 1782. This question is even more valid today when the artist's purpose more than ever is to interpret the world rather than merely copy what he sees.

Slavish copying of the figure is not really drawing; "absolute resemblance" can be uncreative and static. As a creator, as the being responsible for bringing life to a canvas, the artist must *seek out and emphasize* those qualities which best spark aliveness: rhythm, balance and movement. He has license to strengthen the rhythm, the flow of lines, to change curves and angles to make a design of his own. He can control balance and inject movement until he feels confident that his figures do have that magic that makes them live. In fact he must take liberties — must oppose active and inactive shapes, must contrast curves and angles, and play line against tone in order to create a feeling of variety that will give his drawings vital visual impact.

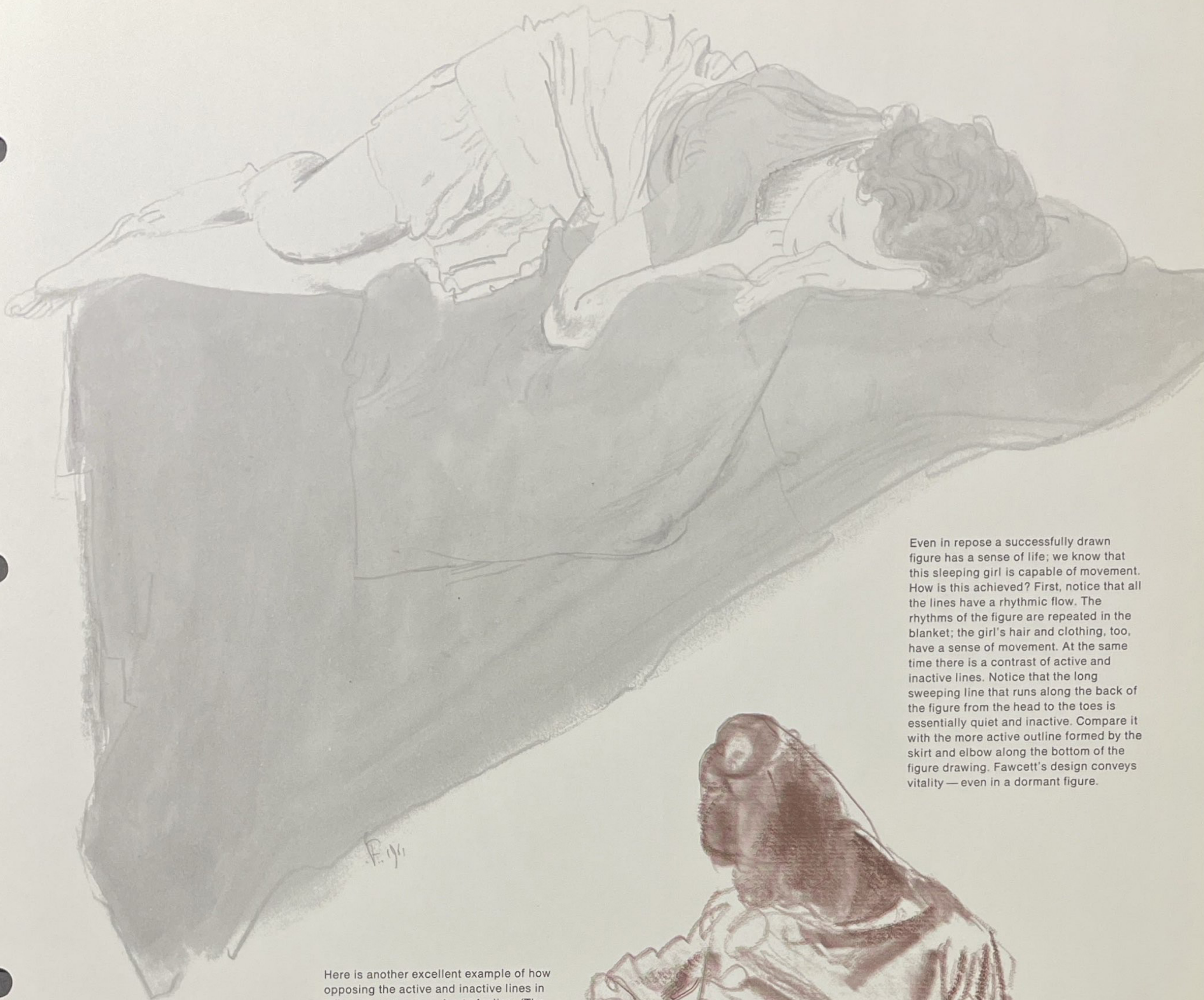
Look at Robert Fawcett's drawings here and see how he has made use of these contrasts to bring life to each figure — and as you approach your work remember that you have the freedom, too, to emphasize or modify these elements which make good design, which make your figures seem alive.

We all have instinctive feelings that tell us when a drawing of a figure is out of balance. Try imagining a vertical center line running through your figure as you draw — this will help you to make sure that it is properly balanced.



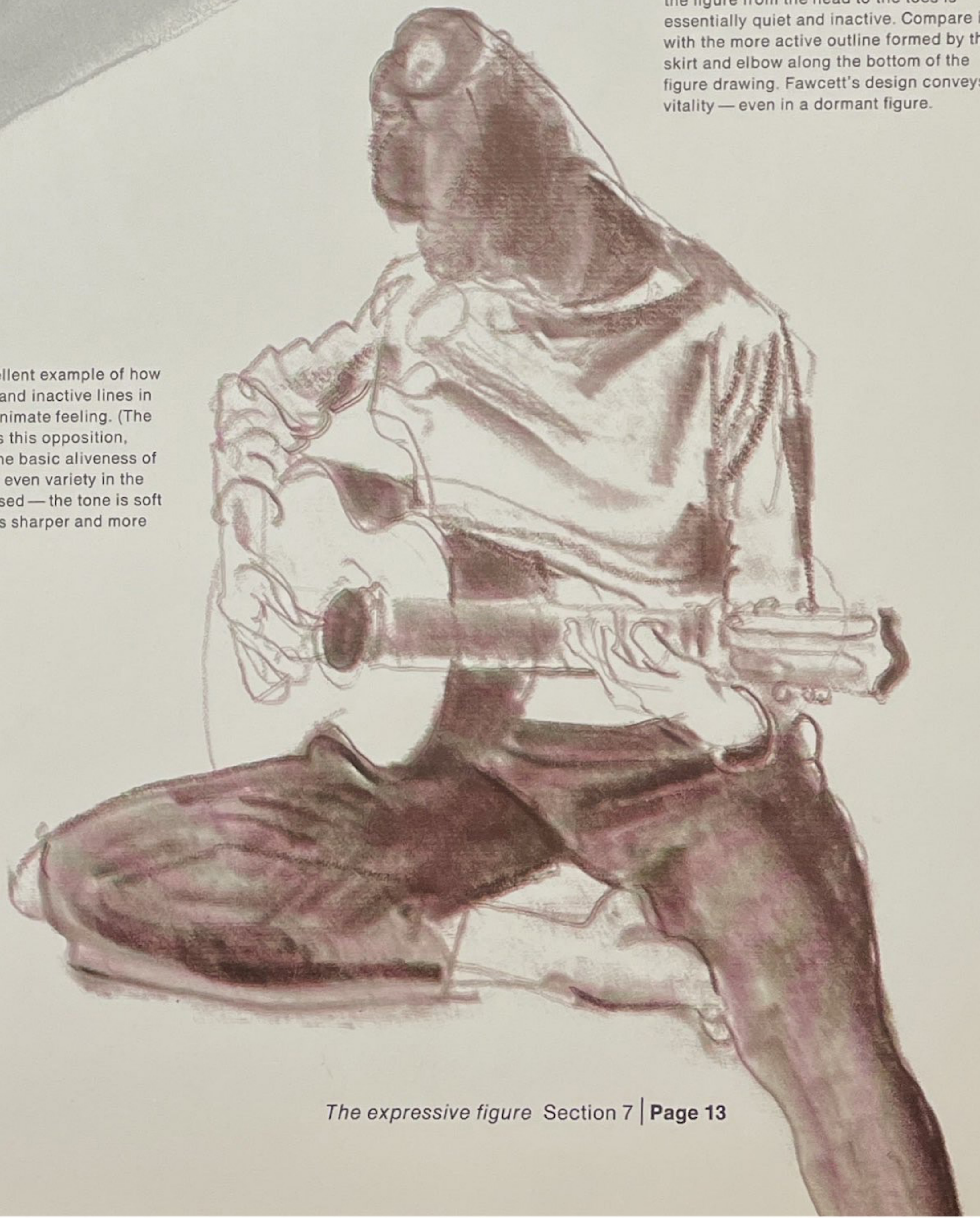
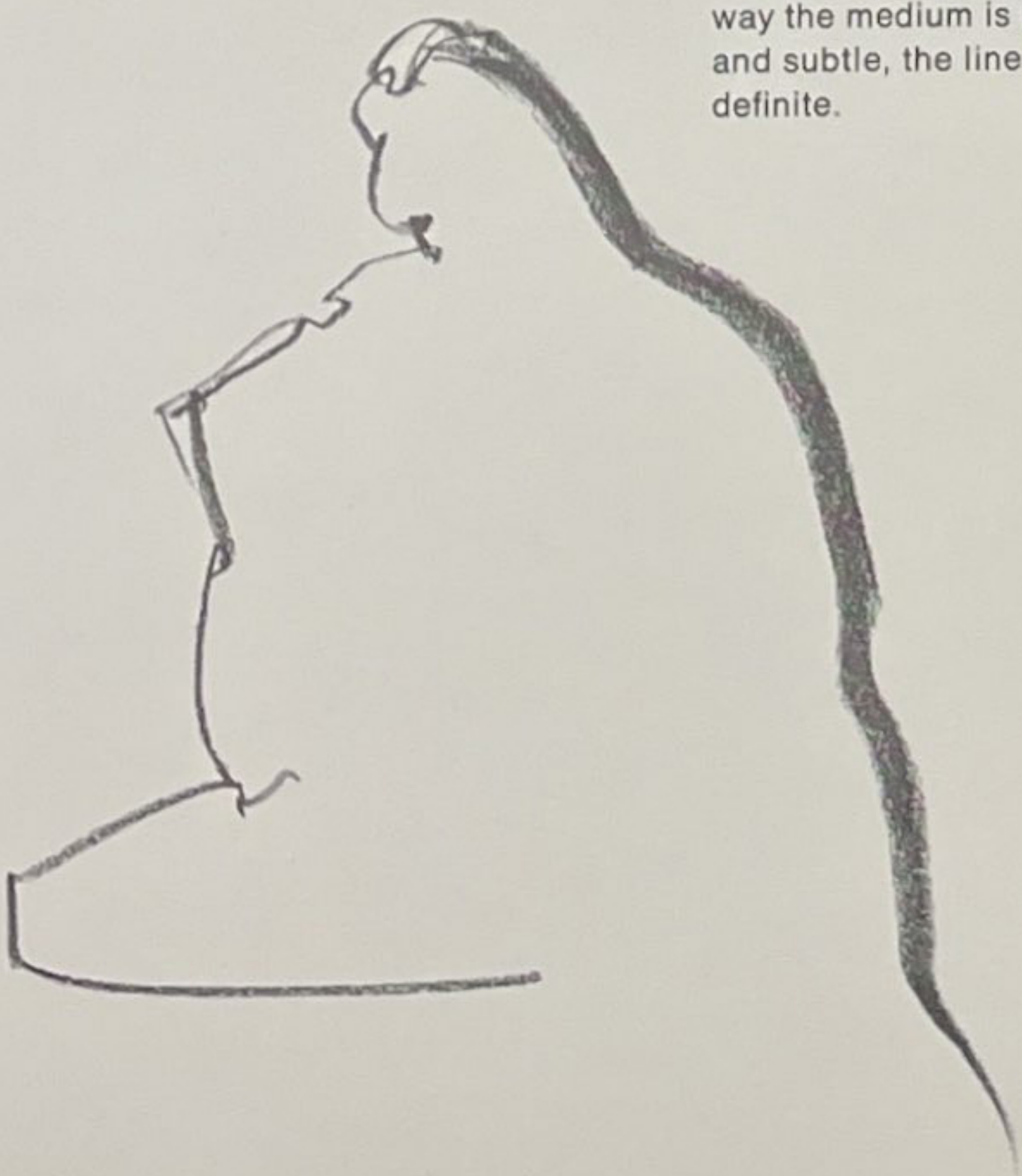
We normally think of the human body as being symmetrical — the left side resembles the right side. However, a figure drawn this way — with one half literally repeating the other — seems stiff and unnatural, as you can see in the diagram at the far left. Notice the "aliveness" in the figure alongside, which plays up contrasting curves and angles and emphasizes the opposing slant of hips and shoulders as the figure balances his weight on one leg. The human figure in profile — even standing at stiff attention — is not a rigid set of lines either, but is actually a series of opposing curves and angles as the arrows indicate.





Even in repose a successfully drawn figure has a sense of life; we know that this sleeping girl is capable of movement. How is this achieved? First, notice that all the lines have a rhythmic flow. The rhythms of the figure are repeated in the blanket; the girl's hair and clothing, too, have a sense of movement. At the same time there is a contrast of active and inactive lines. Notice that the long sweeping line that runs along the back of the figure from the head to the toes is essentially quiet and inactive. Compare it with the more active outline formed by the skirt and elbow along the bottom of the figure drawing. Fawcett's design conveys vitality — even in a dormant figure.

Here is another excellent example of how opposing the active and inactive lines in a figure creates an animate feeling. (The small diagram shows this opposition, clearly pointing up the basic aliveness of the design.) There is even variety in the way the medium is used — the tone is soft and subtle, the line is sharper and more definite.





Monument to Balzac, Auguste Rodin  
Collection, The Museum of Modern Art, New York  
Presented in memory of Curt Valentin by his friends  
Photograph by Edward Steichen

## The expressiveness of drapery

"Drapery — an artistic arrangement of loose folds" is a compact, accurate, dictionary description but one that gives no hint of the value of drapery to the artist. Drapery, the loose folds found in all clothing on a human figure, reveals the underlying form, helps an artist create character, and can give a sense of movement as well as convey mood. Drapery plays an important role, too, in composition and design, and in enhancing the decorative quality of a drawing or painting.

The statue of Balzac at the right shows that the sculptor has seen the form and action of drapery as something to be used dramatically. The soaring lines of the folds in the cloak turned the portly man into a heroic figure; without the strong rhythmic lines of these folds this would seem but a short, sturdy shape. Now study the Japanese print, where the folds and pattern of the kimonos have been used to create a rhythmic design that unifies the three figures. Artists often use drapery to help create a feeling of movement — or leave out folds to suggest tranquility. Look at Modigliani's seated woman. Here the artist intentionally omitted even a suggestion of drapery. The flat surfaces of her dress are in keeping with the blandness of her smooth face, conveying a sense of serenity.

Anna Zborowska  
The Museum of Modern Art, New York  
Lillie B. Bliss Collection



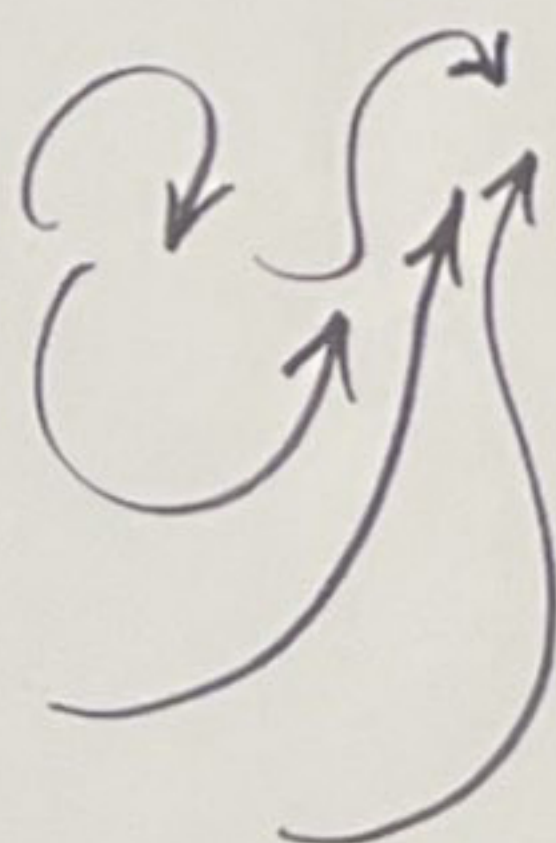
Lovers with Maidservant, Sugimura Jihei Masataka  
The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York  
Harris Brisbane Dick Fund, 1949





## Drapery contributes to the theme

When you draw, don't consider drapery as a kind of after-thought, as something that's merely stuck on — for it is an essential part of your whole picture. The combination of figure and drapery work together to express your theme! Here are some excellent examples in which the action of the drapery is almost at the heart of the artist's idea.



### Spirit and action

The abandon of the cancan and the lively sense of movement could not be conveyed without the sweeping lines of the dancer's costume. Toulouse-Lautrec clearly used these linear rhythms as part of his theme.



Musée d'Albi



### Dignity and stability

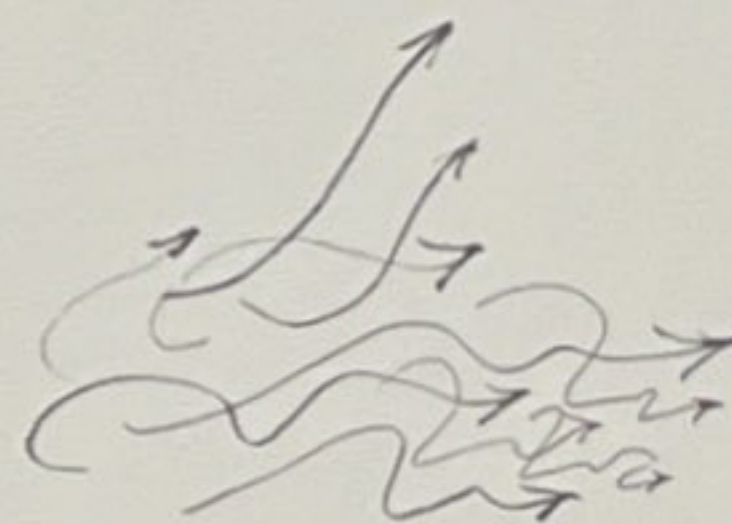
Degas must have viewed his friend and fellow artist, Edouard Manet, as a quiet, dignified and very masculine person. This is certainly conveyed by the drapery. The folds here have been simplified to express stability and solidity — they show well the firm underlying figure.



Study for a Portrait of Edouard Manet, Edgar Degas  
The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York  
Rogers Fund, 1918

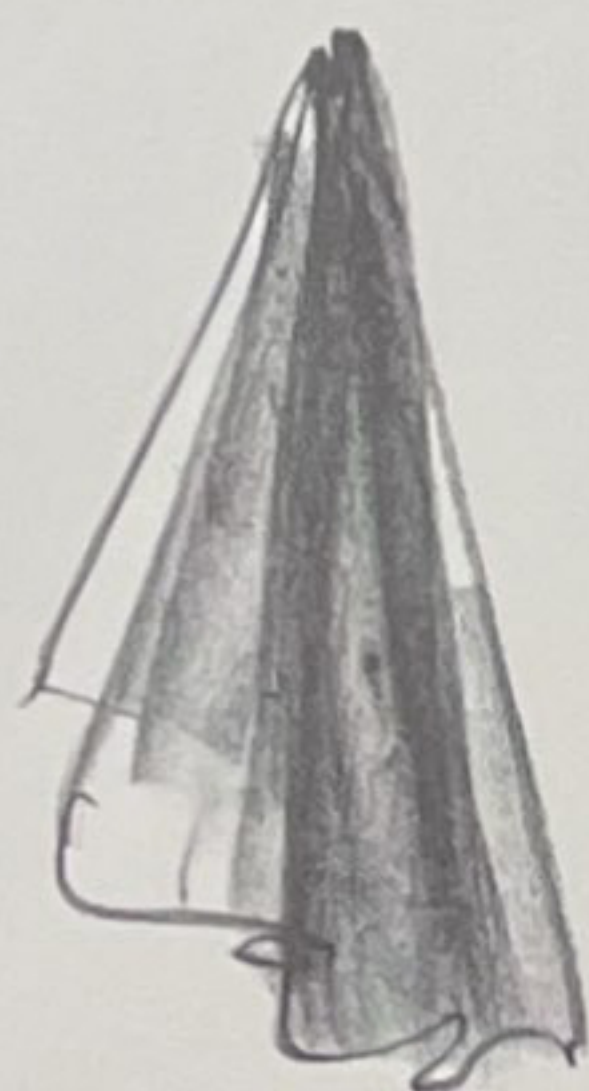
### Light and ethereal

The many folds of the thin, almost transparent gown not only reveal the underlying form of this female but give her grace, delicacy and a floating quality. (You won't be surprised to learn that Botticelli had the goddess Venus in mind when he drew this picture!)



Abundance, or Autumn  
Trustees of the British Museum, London

## Points to remember



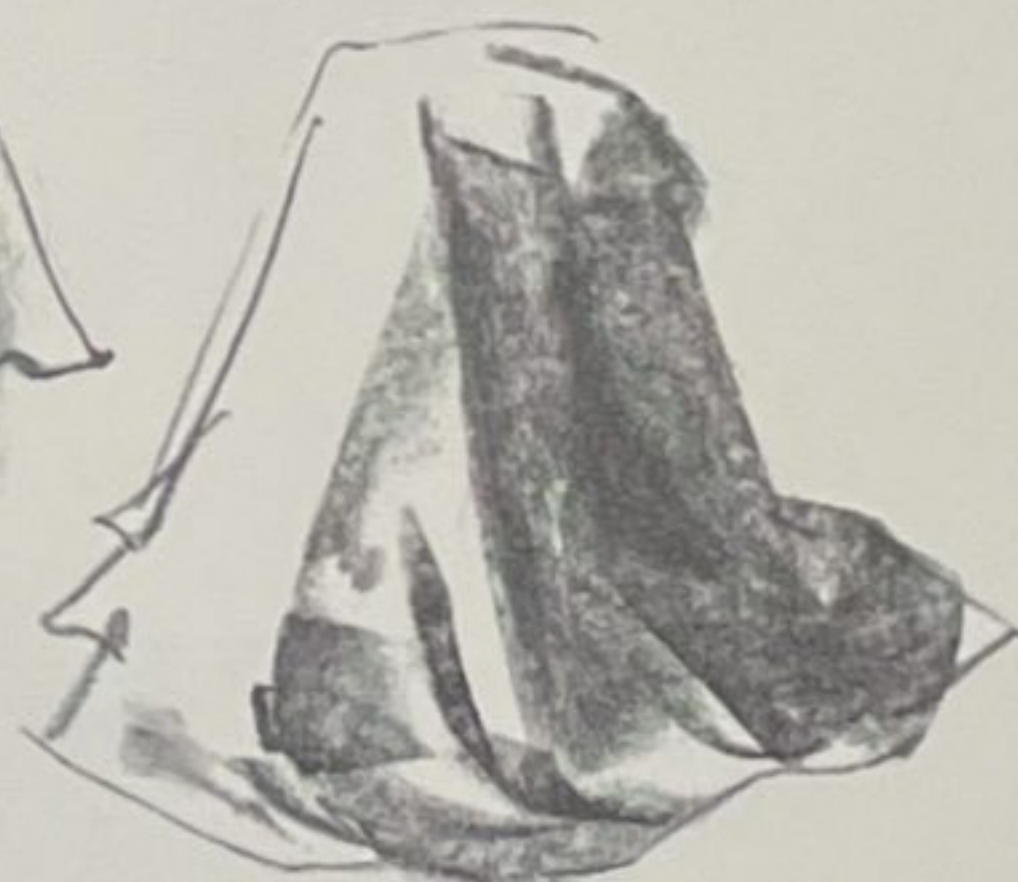
### Feel the effect of gravity

Folds, like everything else, are affected by gravity — they tend to hang downward, to lie against the figure. Notice the gravity folds in your own clothes and be aware of this effect in all the drapery you draw.



### Look for tension points

Folds radiate from certain points of tension — from where the figure bends (such as inside the elbow, behind the knee and under the arm) and from those points from which drapery hangs, like shoulders and hips.



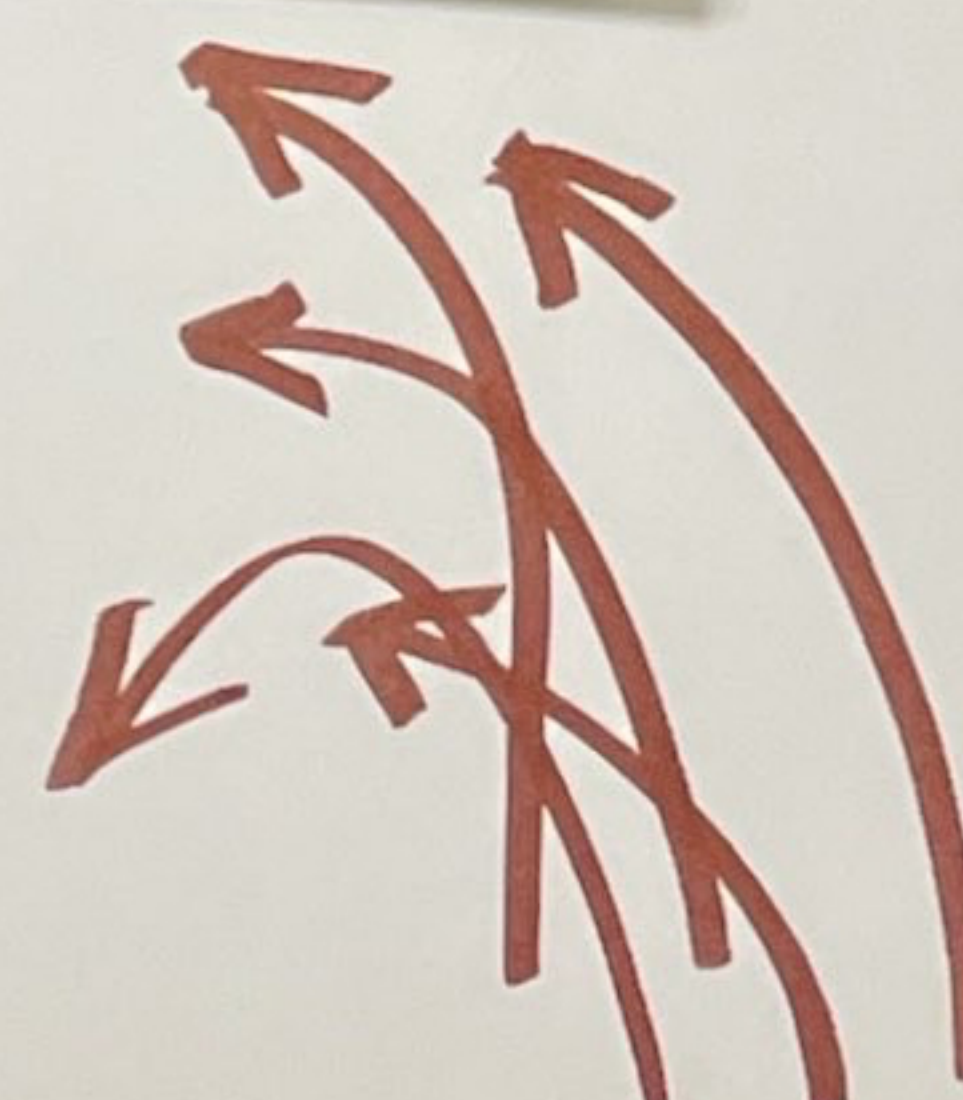
### Keep it simple!

Look for the essential lines of action, the main flow and direction of drapery, but don't copy every fold or crease you see — be selective. If you get carried away, the result will look like a mass of wrinkles.





This detail of El Greco's famous painting shows variations of one emotion: fear. These money changers shrink back, cowering, recoiling — their sense of fear has been effectively recorded in their figure attitudes, though their individual actions are quite different. (We've simplified the action of the recoiling figures in the diagram at the right.)







Weariness, sorrow, depression are clearly conveyed by lines which sag and seem to droop.

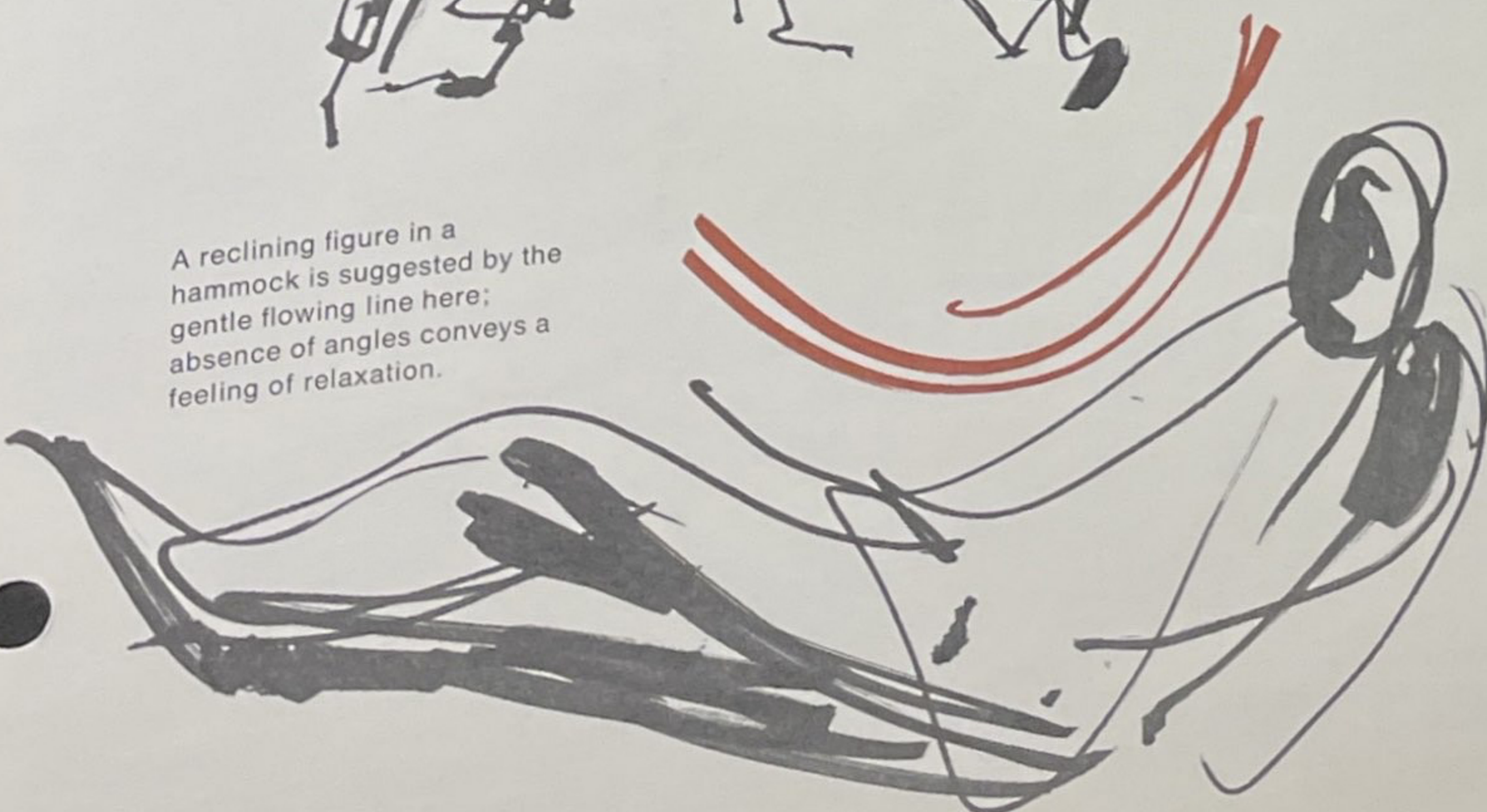


Outstretched arms and legs help to form a radiating shape that says happiness, gaiety or excitement.



Jagged lines, explosively sharp angles express a feeling of power, action, violence.

A reclining figure in a hammock is suggested by the gentle flowing line here; absence of angles conveys a feeling of relaxation.



## Figure attitudes

Moods — those states of mind which rise and fall, shift and fluctuate in all of us — can be conveyed by the artist in many ways so they arouse real responses and understanding in a viewer. Shapes, lines, color, composition all evoke emotion, but when the subject is the human figure it is the figure attitude that most clearly expresses emotion. When you first started to draw, perhaps back in kindergarten, you probably drew smiling or weeping faces and put them on sprightly stick bodies — and may have felt ever since that a grin or a tear tells what a figure is feeling. But there is much more to putting across mood than that!

To show what the people in your pictures are experiencing you must consider carefully the attitude of the overall figure that will convey your subject's emotions the most convincingly. Leonardo da Vinci underlined this need when he said, "We must show by the action of the body the attitude of the mind."

There are certain actions that can be reduced to mood symbols which can help you. The quick sketches on this page — they're really gesture drawings — show how the direction and intensity of simple lines and shapes suggest the emotions they represent. The starlike symbol that expresses joy, the droop of dejection are obvious. Of course, there are more subtle moods you'll want to convey by varying figure attitudes, but these will serve as a guide. Moods and attitudes shift quickly, so you'll have to be alert and determine which emotion is predominant in any situation. For example, don't think that a sitting man can only convey a dejected attitude such as the one shown above. A seated figure may also appear attentive, bored, or relaxed. You should look for and emphasize the major lines which convey the characteristic mood or attitude you want your drawing to describe.

From now on, look at every person you meet — try to imagine what emotion you could convey if you drew or painted him just as he stands.



Renoir's painting is filled with a pervading feeling of pleasantness; we know this gathering is a light-hearted social situation, not an earnest or agitated meeting. The grouping of heads makes for a feeling of intimacy, the relaxed figure attitudes help convey this, too, and we can almost hear the congenial conversation. The overall composition leads our eye from one group to another so we ourselves become involved in the whole scene.

*Luncheon of the Boating Party, Auguste Renoir*  
The Phillips Collection  
Washington, D.C.



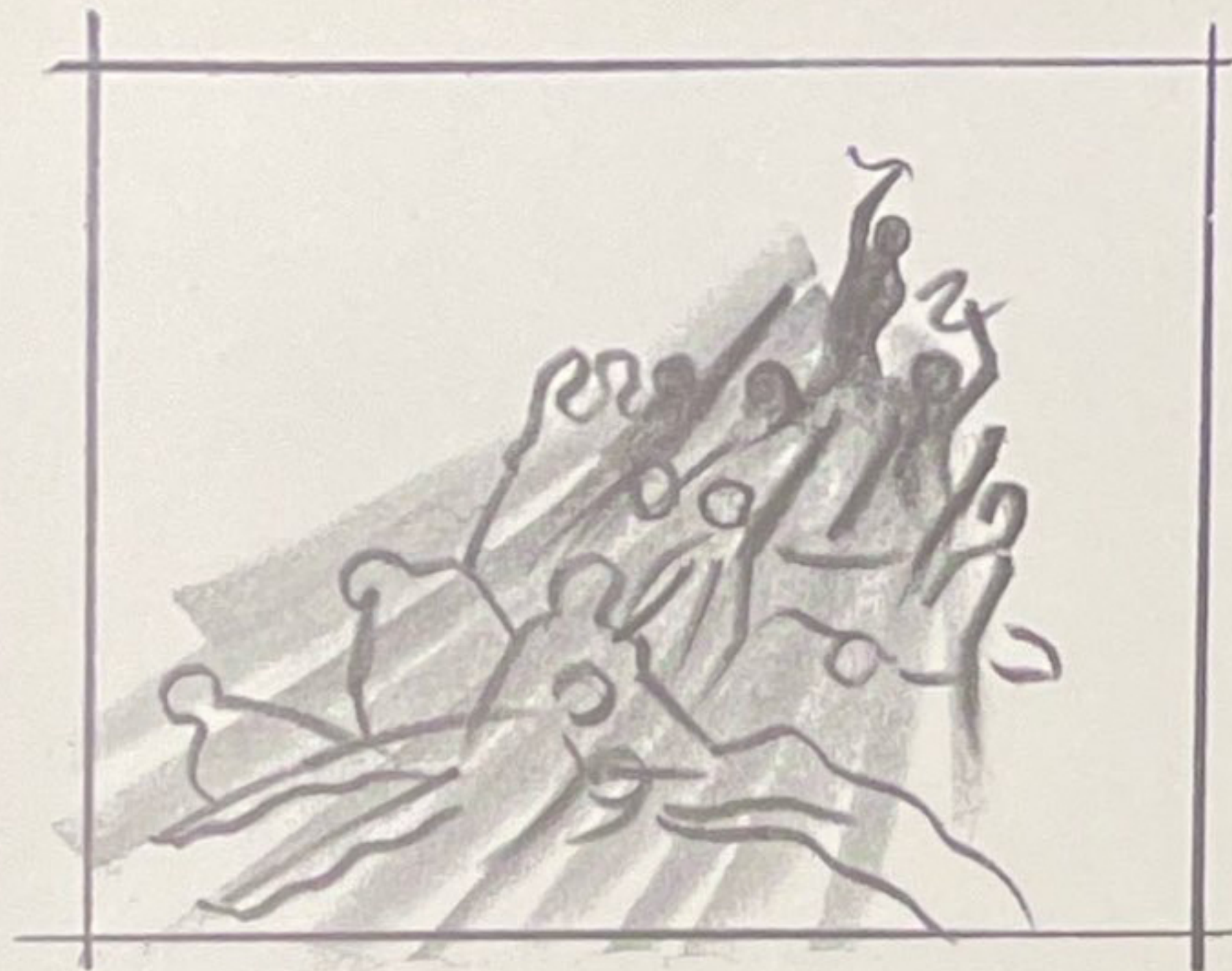
### Figures in composition

When you look at a painting and the artist's message goes straight to your heart and mind — really hitting home — you know that his composition has been successful, that he has said what he wanted to. How figures relate to the spaces around them, the relationship of shapes and colors — that is, the composition of the picture — contributes greatly to the emotional impact on a person looking at a painting. The subject matter may attract our attention, but it's the composition that really draws us into a scene and involves us in what the artist has painted, makes us understand what he is saying. The way he relates one person to another, the way he sets a figure in relation to the picture area or to the background can have a powerful total effect.

Look long at the pictures on these pages and you'll feel how each one calls forth the responses the artist sought for . . . mingled, of course, with your own very personal reactions. The same subjects set into place differently would arouse an entirely different set of feelings. The small diagrams prove that without really knowing what the subject matter is, the relationship of the figures to the rest of the picture — the composition — holds the essence, the joy, the hope, the despair, the humor of the artist's story.





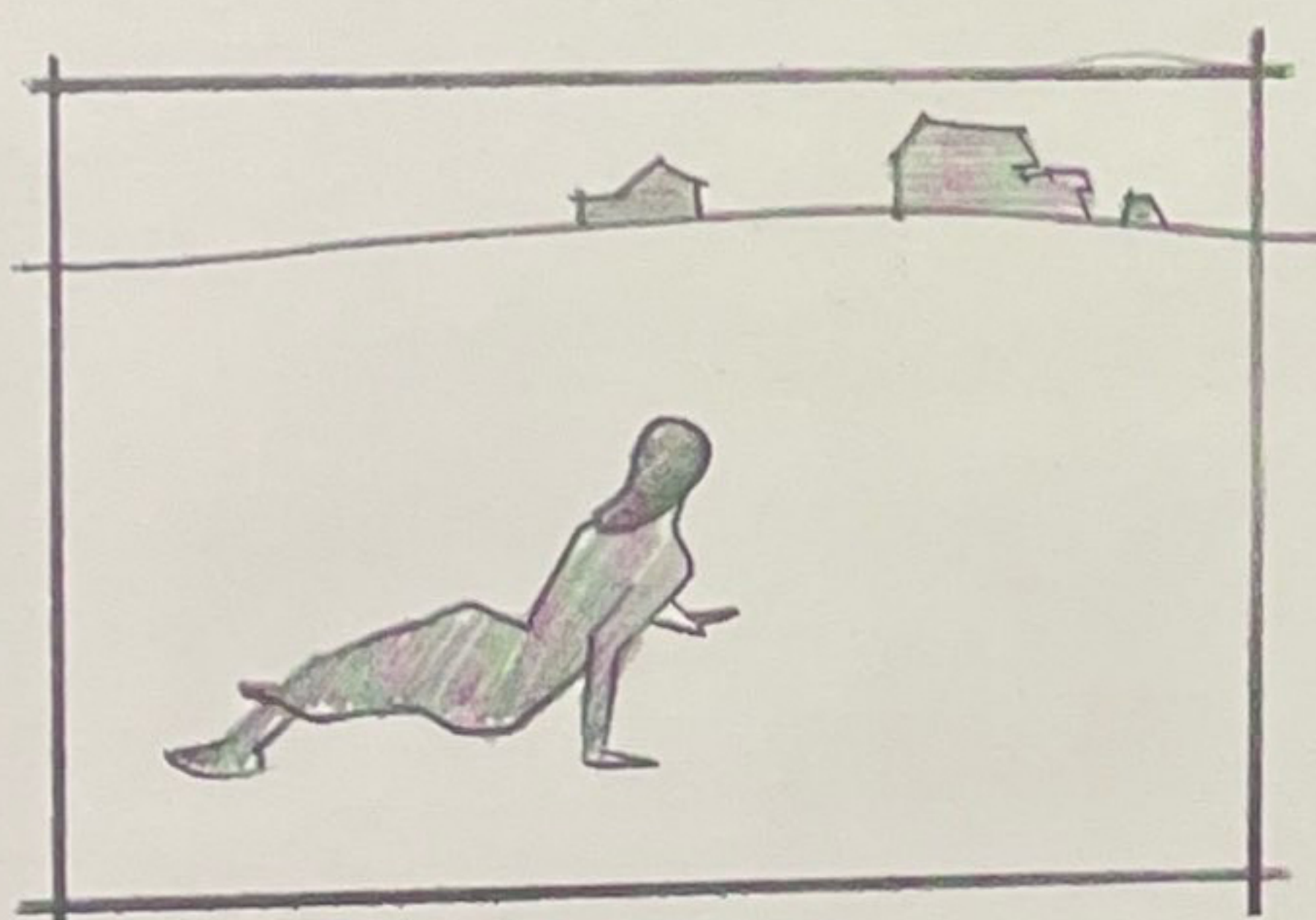


The pathos of the tortured castaways in this composition, sprawled out and huddled in defeat, would fill us with despair, but Géricault's upward sweep to the heroic men, still standing, still hopeful, leads us to believe that rescue will arrive. A different composition might carry quite a different story!



*The Raft of the Medusa*, Théodore Géricault  
Cliché des Musées Nationaux  
Louvre, Paris

*Christina's World*, Andrew Wyeth  
Collection, The Museum of Modern Art, New York, Purchase



How Christina, a crippled girl who lived near artist Wyeth, was placed in this picture dramatizes her loneliness and the tremendous distance she must struggle to reach home. Even in the diagram the relationship of the girl to the picture borders and to the background buildings emphasizes her isolation, but note that the figure attitude does carry a note of hope and suggests strength of the spirit.

How do you react to this woman? Abstract paintings demand a little extra effort on the viewer's part to respond to what the artist is really saying. Even though the subject matter seems less real than we have been used to, the composition is still important. In the painting below DeKooning has handled his composition rather harshly; there is a determined lack of finish. The background shapes are not clear; in fact, the figure at times seems to become part of the background and vice versa. Feel the activity over the entire picture surface!



*Woman I*, Willem de Kooning  
Collection, The Museum of Modern Art, New York, Purchase

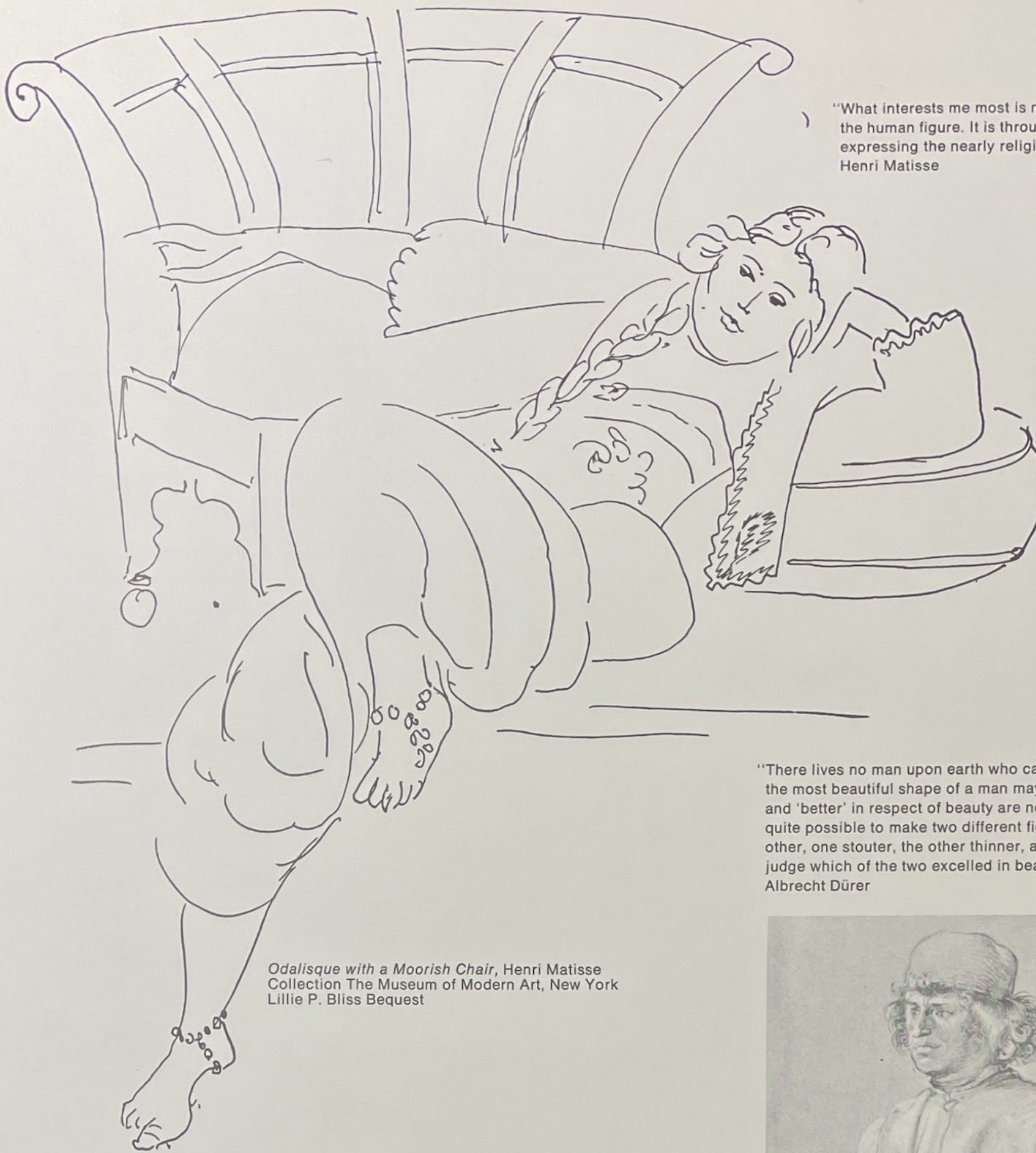


Cartoon for a *Saint Anne, Virgin and Child*, Leonardo da Vinci  
Reproduced by courtesy of the Trustees  
The National Gallery, London

"A good painter has two chief objects to paint, namely, man, and the intention of his soul. The first is easy, the second difficult, because he has to represent it through the attitude and movements of the limbs."  
Leonardo da Vinci







*Odalisque with a Moorish Chair*, Henri Matisse  
Collection The Museum of Modern Art, New York  
Lillie P. Bliss Bequest

"What interests me most is neither still life nor landscape but the human figure. It is through it that I best succeed in expressing the nearly religious feeling that I have toward life."  
Henri Matisse

"There lives no man upon earth who can give a final judgment upon what the most beautiful shape of a man may be; God only knows that . . . 'Good' and 'better' in respect of beauty are not easy to discern, for it would be quite possible to make two different figures, neither conforming with the other, one stouter, the other thinner, and yet we might scarce be able to judge which of the two excelled in beauty."  
Albrecht Dürer

"The human body is, above all, the mirror of the soul, and from the soul comes its greatest beauty."  
Auguste Rodin



*Torso*, Auguste Rodin  
Rodin Museum, Philadelphia  
Courtesy Philadelphia Museum of Art



*Donor with Rosary Kneeling in Prayer*, Albrecht Dürer  
The Pierpont Morgan Library, New York





Lorraine Fox



Ben Stahl

## Vary your figure drawing

There are many approaches you can take when drawing the human figure. Try different ones, for the practice — but mainly for the joy of drawing in various ways. For instance, try a contour drawing, keeping your eye focused on your model as you draw. Don't look at your paper, but let your hand lead your pencil, very carefully following the contours of the figure you're looking at. Now try the opposite procedure — this is called memory drawing. Look long and hard at your model, noting all the features you feel are important. Then start to draw, never referring to the model again until you've completed the picture.

Then do some sustained studies. Observe carefully, draw with great care, erasing when necessary, building up lines where you wish. Catch details you feel are necessary, working toward a highly "finished" drawing.

Vary your tools, too — using charcoal, pen and ink, pencil, paint, or crayon. Study the drawings on this page, which were done by members of our Guiding Faculty. They are examples of but a few of the individual approaches that can be used in drawing the human figure.



Bernard Fuchs



Franklin McMahon



Assignment

Section

7

The expressive figure

**Important** These instructions are extremely important to you. Read them through carefully from start to finish. Do your assignment work only after you have done the practice exercises in Section 7. Pay particular attention to the projects on pages 7, 9, and 11. Do not send these exercises to the School unless directed to do so in your assignment instructions below.

"We must show by the action of the body the attitude of the mind." *Leonardo da Vinci*

To send to the School

Practice project

While you were studying this section, and as part of your practice work for it, you should have made many gesture drawings. Select any *three* of these drawings that you feel are the most successful in expressing *three different actions*.

Under each drawing describe the action you wanted to express.

You may fold your drawings if they are too large for your mailing carton. Mail these three drawings to the School along with your assignment work.

Section 7 assignment work

We don't expect you to be an "Old Master" at drawing the figure. Keep this in mind as you do this assignment. What we are after is to find out how well you understand the idea of using figures to create an attitude or a mood in pictures.

For this assignment, make one picture with **THREE** figures. Work in any medium you wish on an 11 x 14-inch sheet of paper or Canvaskin. Leave at least a one-inch border all around your picture.

In doing this assignment you should be concerned with:

- 1
- Expressing definite attitudes with your figures.

- 2
- Relating your figures to each other and to the overall picture space.

In a figure composition, remember that you should include any background or additional objects that are necessary to express your idea.

Here are some words to help stimulate your thinking about your picture:

Peaceful	Eager	Impatient
Angry	Sprawling	Sports
Dancing	Music	
Despairing	Conversation	

In making your picture it would be a good idea to get your friends to pose for you or go through the action you have chosen. Direct observation is always a big help in drawing or painting figures.

Print on the back of your practice drawings and your assignment picture:

Your name  
Student number  
Address  
Assignment number

(over, please)

Cut along this line—and mail with your assignment

Section

7

The expressive figure

Comment sheet

In the space below, write a brief description of your picture and describe the mood and attitude of your figures.

Name Student number

Date



### **Check before mailing**

Your assignment carton should contain:

- 3 gesture drawings
- 1 picture with three figures on an 11 x 14-inch sheet of paper or Canvaskin
- 1 comment sheet (on other side of this page)
- 1 shipping label filled out completely with your name and address

Mail this carton to:

**Famous Artists School**  
**Westport, Connecticut 06880**

Note: Be *sure* your art is thoroughly dry before mailing.